Worcestershire County Council, Directorate of Economy & Infrastructure
Application 19/000053/CM.

Proposed sand and gravel extraction at Lea Castle Farm, Wolverley

On behalf of NRS Aggregates Ltd

December 2020

Additional Response from Hereford & Worcester Gardens Trust (HWGT)

This comment, as the previous comment has been prepared by Jane Patton on behalf of HWGT. Jane Patton is a retired chartered landscape architect and previous member of the Landscape Institute and has practised for many years in Worcestershire both in the private and public sectors. Latterly, for Worcestershire County Council assessing the landscape impact of planning applications. She is also editor of the *Survey of Historic Parks & Gardens in Worcestershire.*

General

The Application Site extends over roughly half the area of the 19th century park at Lea Castle, Wolverley. Lea Castle appears in Lockett's *Survey of Historic Parks & Gardens in Worcestershire,* published by HWGT. It is not a Registered park or garden, a designation that relates to national or international interest. It is, however, of considerable local interest and contributes to the landscape character and cultural and historical understanding of the parish of Wolverley.

Overall Concerns

The Applicant has provided further information that, on one hand addresses some of our previous concerns but, on the other hand raises new concerns, particularly with regard to planting.

Impact on Visual Amenity

The Application Site is elevated land, readily viewed from surrounding roads and footpaths. We still believe that the visual impact of extraction will be far greater than that stated in the Application documents. We acknowledge that this will be for a limited period and that the site will be returned to a rural character. We note that some limited additional hedgerow planting is

now shown along the eastern boundary but this will not be planted until the end of the final extraction phase. We would suggest that further consideration be given to screening of the works using advanced planting on the boundaries at the beginning of the site's life.

Impact on the Avenue

We note the revised landscape sections that indicate that the retained and replanted avenue will not, as initially feared be seen as a strip of elevated land across the site. However, the topsoil bund shown on drawing entitled Phase 5 Working and Restoration appears to lie very close to the line of the avenue. This should be pulled away from the avenue to prevent soil compaction or damage to new planting.

We also recommend that the avenue is replanted at the beginning of the site's life, preferably as part of the enabling works. This will allow the trees to establish during the extraction period.

Planting Proposals

- It still appears from the drawings that the intention is to carry out all the restoration planting at the end of the extraction life. We recommend that each phase should be restored, including all associated planting at the end of that phase's extraction. This will allow the planting to establish during the working life of the site and to provide some maturity at the end.
- It appears that the intention is to plant the avenue with mixed species. We strongly advise against this as it will result in an uneven formation. Avenues, by their very nature are a single entity made up of individual identical trees. We recommend that the avenue be planted with either native beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) or common lime (*Tilia europaea*), depending on the number and condition of the surviving trees.
- We note that the hedgerow planting notes mention oak but it is not in the planting specification. We recommend that it is added to the hedgerow trees mix.
- Beating up and restocking failures should be undertaken each year, not as shown.
- We recommend that the Applicant is required to produce a 25 year management plan to ensure the ongoing maintenance and development of the site.
- We would recommend a few more parkland trees.