

[REDACTED]

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**From:** king peter [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 January 2021 16:55  
**To:** Aldridge, Steven  
**Subject:** RE: Further Information (Regulation 25) - Land at Lea Castle Farm, Kidderminster, Worcestershire - Ref: 19/000053/CM  
**Attachments:** WCC 19-000053-CM Lea Castle Farm v21.docx; Wolverley Townships map.pdf

I missed one of the attachments when I sent this earlier. Both attachments now attached.

Peter King

On 29 January 2021 at 15:23 king peter [REDACTED] wrote:

I am sorry not to have been able to make a further response before this, but have been tied up in participating in the Examination of the Wyre Forest Plan. This meant that I could not devote the time to this subject that it deserved.

The attached is an expanded version of the objection sent approximately a year ago. I do not see anything, in such of the further documents submitted as I have read, to require me to alter my views, but the attached does reflect the progress of the Examination.

Peter King

On 13 January 2021 at 16:58 "Aldridge, Steven" <SAldridge@worcestershire.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Application Ref:** 19/000053/CM      **Grid Ref:** (E) 383959, (N) 278992

**Applicant:** NRS Aggregates Ltd

**Proposal:** Proposed sand and gravel quarry with progressive restoration using site derived and imported inert material to agricultural parkland, public access and nature enhancement

**Location:** Land at Lea Castle Farm, Wolverley Road, Broadwaters, Kidderminster, Worcestershire

Further to my consultation emails below regarding the above proposal, the deadline for comments has now passed and do not appear to have received any comments from you on the second consultation on the submitted further environmental information (known as Regulation 25). I would be most grateful for any comments you may wish to make on the proposal by **27 January 2021**. If this is not possible, please let me know. If I do not receive any comments from you by this date, I will assume your original comments on the application remain unchanged.

Kind regards

Steve

**Steven Aldridge**

Team Manager – Development Management

Worcestershire County Council

County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP

**Tel:** 01905 843510

**Mob:** 07985334367

**Email:** [saldridge@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:saldridge@worcestershire.gov.uk)



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**From:** Development Control team

**Sent:** 19 November 2020 13:08

**To:** 'secretary@cpreworcestershireshire.org.uk' <secretary@cpreworcestershireshire.org.uk>; 'chairman@cpreworcestershireshire.org.uk' <chairman@cpreworcestershireshire.org.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Further Information (Regulation 25) - Land at Lea Castle Farm, Kidderminster, Worcestershire - Ref: 19/000053/CM

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re-Consultation on a Planning Application (County Matter)  
Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)**

**Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)  
Regulations 2017**

**The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure,  
Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England)  
(Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020**

**Submission of Further Information in respect of the Environmental  
Statement relating to the following planning application**

**Application Ref:** 19/000053/CM      **Grid Ref:** (E) 383959, (N) 278992

**Applicant:**            NRS Aggregates Ltd

**Proposal:**            Proposed sand and gravel quarry with progressive restoration using  
site derived and imported inert material to agricultural parkland,  
public access and nature enhancement

**Location:**            Land at Lea Castle Farm, Wolverley Road, Broadwaters, Kidderminster,  
Worcestershire

On 10 January 2020 NRS Aggregates Ltd applied to Worcestershire County Council for planning permission for the above proposal. You will recall I consulted you on the above application for planning permission in February 2020.

Following the consideration of the comments that were received on the application and Environmental Statement, the County Council wrote to the applicant in June 2020 requesting further information in respect of the Environmental Statement. On 27 October 2020 the applicant submitted the requested further information, and the County Council are now seeking comments on this further information in relation to a number of matters including: water environment, ecology and biodiversity, landscape, agricultural land classification and soils, cultural heritage, transport movement and access, rights of way, and restoration and aftercare.

The applicant is seeking planning permission to extract approximately 3 million tonnes of sand and gravel over a total of 6 phases. The land would be progressively restored using site derived and imported inert material to agricultural parkland, public access and nature enhancement. The applicant estimates the development would take approximately 11 years to complete.

A copy of this further information together with the planning application, the plans, the Environmental Statement, the Non-Technical Summary and other documents submitted with the application can be inspected online at: [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/eplanning](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/eplanning) using the application reference 19/000053/CM until **4 January 2021**. When searching by application reference, please ensure that the full application reference number, including the suffix are entered into the search field. **Please note:** when viewing the County Council's Planning Application Website you may wish to use an internet search engine such as Google Chrome, Firefox or Microsoft Edge for improved performance and functionality compared to Microsoft Internet Explorer.

I would be grateful to receive any comments that you may wish to make on the further information / application by **4 January 2021** by email or by post to the address below. If this is not possible then please let me know.

***Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic the majority of Council staff are working remotely. We have made arrangements for letters sent via the postal service to be distributed to the appropriate officer. Where possible, we encourage all comments / correspondence to be submitted by email or online using the above link.***

Please note that all correspondence regarding any planning application will be available for inspection by the applicant and any interested third parties.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Kind regards

Steve

**Steven Aldridge**

Team Manager – Development Management

Worcestershire County Council

County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP

**Tel:** 01905 843510

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Email: [saldrige@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:saldrige@worcestershire.gov.uk)



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**Worcestershire**

Standing up for your countryside

From the Chairman:  
Dr. Peter King



29 January 2021

Director of Planning  
Worcestershire County Council (by e-mail)

Dear Sir,

**19/000053/CM Lea Castle Farm**

I object on behalf of CPRE to the above application.

I set out in an appendix at the end of this letter a history of the site. My sources for this and the depth of research will be greater than anything likely to be provided by the Worcestershire Archaeological Service. For reasons expressed below, the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment is significantly flawed. My doctorate is in economic history. I am a very experienced local historian having cut my teeth in the subject in the 1970s with a 'tenement reconstruction' of Kinver and Wolverley, in other words reconstruction landownership history, which in this case I have been able to take back fairly continuously to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

***Green Belt***

NPPF para 90 makes mineral developments an exception to the general prohibition on development in the Green Belt, this is subject to the qualification '*provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt*'. This means that the Green Belt status of the land cannot be just overridden as if it did not exist. The commonly-heard unqualified statement that mineral extraction is a use that is appropriate in the Green Belt is an incorrect oversimplification.

The phrase '*purposes of including land in Green Belt*' clearly refers back to the five purposes of the Green Belt in para 80. These include:

- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*

In the present context, keeping towns apart should perhaps be extended to include significant settlements of all kinds. In this case, the settlements in question are Kidderminster and Cookley, which are about 1.4 km apart at their nearest points. This is a narrow gap and this site sits in the middle of it. Accordingly the development of the site for gravel quarrying will substantially erode the Green Wedge keeping these settlements apart.

This relatively narrow wedge has already suffered encroachment by the establishment of the former Lea Castle Hospital, which was presumably permitted under the "very special circumstances" exception about 50 years ago, but is now under Wyre Forest's Development Plan classified as a major developed site in the Green Belt, whose redevelopment is being permitted. In addition the draft Local Plan (in the course of its examination) proposes that the rest of the block of land between A449, B4189, A451, and Axborough Lane should be developed, perhaps for mixed uses, but mainly housing. Scattered development along B5189 Wolverley Road and Sion Hill already detracts from the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed quarry will aggravate this so that there will cease to be much open countryside between Kidderminster and Cookley. The result of any erosion of this Green Belt gap is likely substantially to endanger the viability of the rest of it.

**The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.**

President: David Hawkins

Chairman: Dr. Peter King

Secretary: Terra Newman – secretary@cpworcestertshire.org.uk

Vice-President: Ann Stallard

Vice-Chairman: Frank Hill

Registered charity 201606

There are circumstances where exceptionally land needs to be taken out of the Green Belt and released for development, but NPPF paragraph 83 indicates that Green Belt boundaries should only be amended *in exceptional circumstances*. The need for sand and gravel, when there are substantial other resources available, clearly takes this out of anything exceptional.

The presence of quarry machinery and processing plant will almost inevitably affect the openness of the area. The eastern end of site appeared to be in arable cultivation when I passed it. A449 runs in the bottom of a dry valley, so that the eastern end of the site is highly visible from A449 and B4189 westbound from Parkgate Inn to A449, so that extraction from the slope above A449 will have a considerable landscape impact.

I am also concerned about a quarry in this location generating add-on development, as has happened at Wildmoor Quarry in Belbroughton, where the quarry has generated a truck repair business and perhaps a takeaway kiosk in a rural Green Belt location where that kind of thing ought never to be permitted. This is perhaps a sort of stealth development, where planning enforcement has failed and ancillary uses have been allowed to expand beyond being ancillary. It would be highly undesirable to have such development in a narrow Green Wedge.

### ***Local impact***

The site is crossed by several well-used footpaths. Mineral development will have devastating effect on the settling of these.

Immediately west of the site is a street called Brown-Westhead Park, which is separated from the development in places by a narrow belt of trees. There are also houses on and a school on the opposite side of Wolverley Road, as well as the lodges of Lea Castle Park (which are listed buildings).

Mineral development of this kind inevitably involves machinery (and hence noise). Sand extraction is liable to involve dust, giving rise to the risk of silicosis. These should be unacceptable in immediate proximity to people's homes. Since this concerns so-called solid sand, machinery will be needed to grind it up (again noise).

Immediately to the east is the Lea Castle Hospital site, where brownfield land is currently under development for 600 dwellings, with a further 800, a primary school and a local centre proposed for land adjoining this. CPRE has opposed the expansion at the Examination of the Wyre Forest Plan, but the council are adamant that they need the new settlement to be 1400 dwellings, to support a two-form entry primary school, so that I fear our objection will be in vain. The latest version of masterplan for this development shows the school and local centre on the slope on the opposite side of the valley used by A449. The landscape impact of the quarry on the school and local centre will be very great.

### ***Traffic***

A449 (Wolverhampton Road) is a very busy road, but generally has traffic flowing freely. A451 (Stourbridge Road) is by comparison relatively quiet. However, neither of these leads to motorway network or Birmingham or the eastern part of the Black Country. To access these, trucks will have to go south on A449 to Land Oak traffic lights, then along A456. A456 is extremely congested at peak times, where it passes through Hagley and again at two further roundabouts near Halesowen (Hailey Green and Grange) in the morning peak and from M5 to Grange roundabout in the evening peak. At these times the road is operating beyond its capacity, leading to long queues. There are several minor roads between A451 and A456, but all of these are unsuitable for use by HGVs.

### ***The resource***

I would further question the assessment of the geological resource that underlies the selection on the area. Geological maps appear to show the summit of the hill at SO843790 as sand and gravel, but much of the rest of the area as Upper Mottled Sandstone (a soft rock, not sand). Parts of the plan appear to refer to this rock as “solid sand”. The sandstone is certainly friable, but very considerable energy would be required to convert the rock into sand. At a time when we are seeking to reduce energy consumption, in the light of climate change, converting sandstone to sand should be a low priority option, to be pursued when easier ones are exhausted.

The western portion of the preferred site (nearest Brown-Westhead Park) appears to be the Fourth River Terrace. I am aware of places in the area (some beyond the county boundary) where these sands and gravels have been worked, but I cannot think of any case of the river terraces being worked in this immediate area. However, lower Terraces have been worked near Stourport and Astley. Both the sands and gravels and the River Terraces occur elsewhere within the corridor, so that there is no dire necessity to select this site rather than other sites within the corridor.

### ***Alternatives***

It is clearly the case that the whole of the North West Worcestershire mineral corridor is in the Green Belt, but that does not mean that all of it is an equally important part of the Green Belt. The whole of the area between A449 and A451 was before inclosure Wolverley Heath, which also extended to some extent south and west of the latter. Unfortunately, the Worcestershire Landscape Study has misclassified this area as Sandstone Estatelands, rather than as Inclosed Common. However there should be plenty of space within that area (north of Lea Castle Hospital) to find a site for a sandstone quarry. This area has wide inclosure roads, some of which are potentially suitable for the HGV traffic that is likely to be associated with a quarry. Upper Mottled Sandstone (which the application calls “solid sand”) is an extremely plentiful resource.

The area west of the river Stour (within Cookley and Wolverley Parish) was the medieval open fields of Cookley, Caunsall and Blakeshall. These fields were the subject of inclosure by private agreement, probably in the early modern period. They generally have narrow roads, characteristic of old inclosed lands and are unsuitable for significant HGV traffic, making them unsuitable for sand to be worked.

### ***Inadequate restoration***

The proposals for restoration seem to involve creating fields in the bottoms of quarries where the land will inevitably have greater shade and thus be less productive. The proposal involves a permanent reduction of the area available for agriculture at a period when the need to grow crops for food and bio-fuels is as high as ever and is only likely to increase with an increasing demand for organic bio-fuels as the country decarbonises to meet the government pledge on climate change. Additional footpaths will no doubt be welcome, but most are merely providing a path within the park wall that parallels a roadside pavement outside it. It must be born in mind that unsurfaced bridleways are churned up by horses to an extent that they become a more impassable to pedestrians, so that additional bridleways are not necessarily welcome. Even if they were desirable, it would be necessary to ensure that they became part of a network of such routes, to provide through routes for those riding for leisure.



## **Conditions**

If your council is so ill-advised as to permit a quarry, the following conditions would be appropriate:

- Full archaeological investigation. The location of the deserted medieval village is probably outside the quarry site, but its precise location is not wholly certain. Detailed field-walking needs to be undertaken to recover surface finds: fields elsewhere in the area have produced Mesolithic flints and Roman and medieval pottery. After the removal of the topsoil, a watching brief will be needed to identify any archaeological remains. If any are found, these will need excavation, as quarrying will irrevocably destroy any remains.
- Land should be restored to its present contours to prevent damage to an attractive, though undesignated landscape with rolling hills and a dry valley (occupied by A449).
- Limitations on the hours when truck movements are permitted, to prevent the quarry aggravating congestion on A456.

## **Committee visit**

I would ask that the planning committee before reaching a decision on this application should be driven along A449 out of Kidderminster and turning into Cookley, pausing to view North Lodge. If possible they should be taken along the bridle way from there and walk footpaths 62.4 across part of the site and 62.2, being met by their transport where this reaches Wolverley Road. They should then be driven to the gate of Lea Castle Hospital, near which there is a good viewpoint from which to see the east part of the site.

Yours Sincerely,



## Appendix – History

Lea Castle Park consists of two elements:

- The medieval farm of La Le, which belonged to the Pitancer of Worcester Cathedral Priory and devolved upon the post-Dissolution collegiate cathedral, from whom it was held by lessees. The late 18<sup>th</sup> century lessees were successive members of the Knight family, ironmasters with Wolverley Old and Cookley Forges (among other works). Under a private Act of Parliament in 1812, they exchanged The Lea (as it was by then spelt) for land they owned at Bromsgrove. This land is to the north of that within the planning application.
- The township of Wolverley (later called Little Wolverley), consisting of four half yardlands (*virgates*) in 1240. Most of these came into the hands of the Jewkes family by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were sold to Edward Knight in 1747 with the rest of their local estates. The final messuage and half yardland (giving John Knight ownership of the whole township) were sold by Slade Nash to John Knight in 1806. At about the same time he bought a piece of land called Cheeses and in 1807 a cottage at Little Wolverley, the last house in the original village of Wolverley, so that this is a deserted medieval village. This would have had the usual set of three open fields.

The former mansion of Lea Castle took its name from The Lea (whose house is between Lea Lane and the Canal) but was actually on copyhold land adjoining the northern boundary of Wolverley township. The creation of Lea Castle Park (as such) must date from after the Nash purchase. Lea Castle and its Park were sold by the Knight family to John Brown in 1828. The park was probably enclosed with its present brick wall and 1818 when John Knight bought a large part of Exmoor and built a new house at Simonsbath. From John Brown, it passed to his wife's nephew J.P. Brown-Westhead and descended to his son Marcus, who enfranchised the property in 1893. His daughter Mrs M.F. Carpenter in 1933 sold Lea Castle, described as a "stately castellated mansion with extensive gardens and beautifully timbered and shrubbed ground and delightful Park Land." The purchaser immediately resold the mansion to H.W. Mitchell (of Mitchells & Butlers, brewers). Not long after this the mansion seems to have been demolished. However, the North and South Lodges (both listed buildings), reflecting the architectural style of the mansion survive.

A449 approximately follows the western edge of Wolverley Heath, which was inclosed and divided among those with common or other rights in it. The accompanying plan (fig.7) is taken from my 'The Minster *Aet Stur*', p.86, and shows the locations and extents of the townships (dotted boundaries) and the extent of Wolverley Heath (hatched boundaries).

### **Sources:**

P.W. King, 'The townships of Wolverley' *A Journal of the Wolverley and Cookley Historical Society* 3 (1992), 24-32.

P.W. King, 'The Minster *Aet Stur* in Husmere and the Northern Boundary of the Hwicce', *Transactions of Worcestershire Archaeological Society* 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 15, 73-91.

L. Ince, *Knight family and the British Iron Industry* 1991).

Wolverley Manor Rolls (WAAS).

Wolverley Inclosure map (WAAS, Preece deposit).

Deeds of the Brown-Westhead family, deposited by writer (for his then firm) in WAAS.

Deeds of Knight family in the Kidderminster Library collection (now in WAAS).

Sale particulars (1933) in writer's possession.

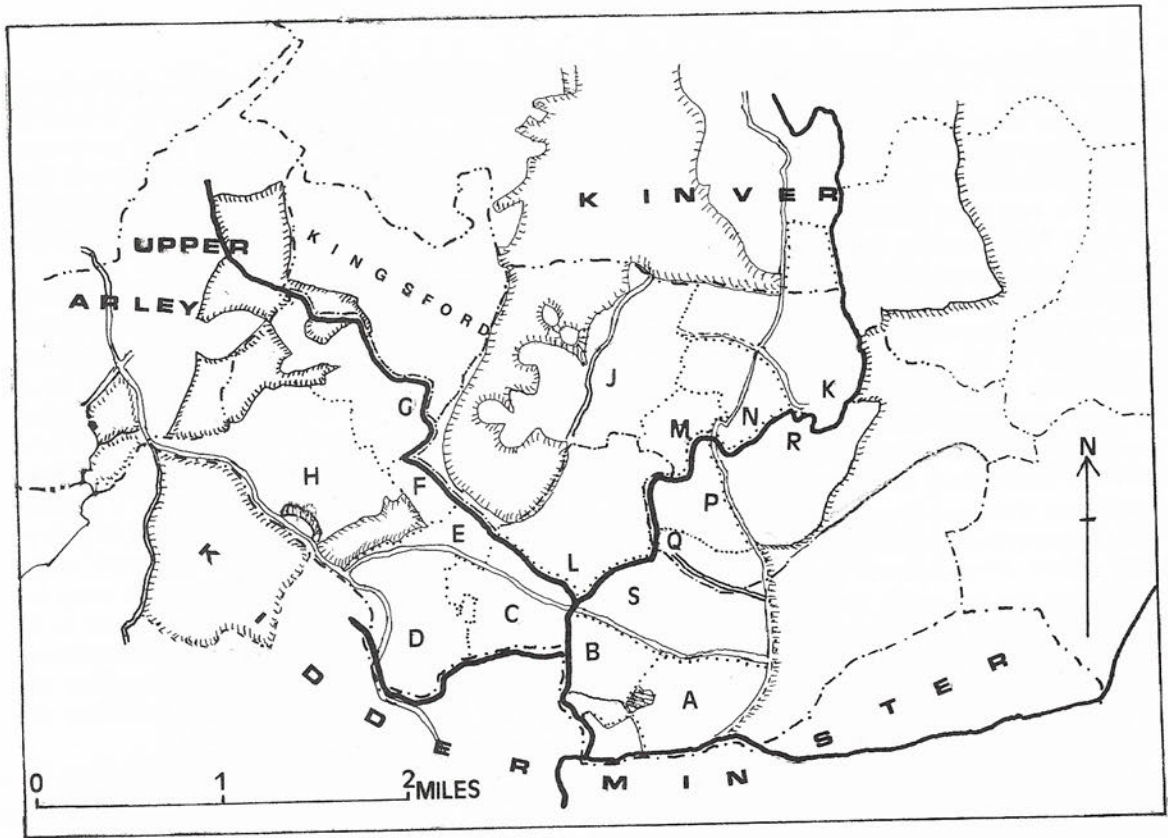


Fig. 7 Township and manorial boundaries in Wolverley parish.  
 A-Upton, B-†Wolverley Court, C-†Bury Hall, D-The Lowe, E-\*The Hill, F-\*Drakelow, G-\*Holborough (now Hobro), H-Horseley, J-Blakeshall, K-Caunsall, L-Woodhamcote, M-Debdale, N-Cookley, P-The Lea (Trimpley Chantry), Q-The Lea (Pittancer), R-Austcliffe, S-Wolverley.  
 Those marked \* are discrete farms, rather than townships; those marked † are larger discrete properties. The areas with hatched edges are former heath and wood.

TABLE 2  
 The extents of Wolverley and Cookley

Township	villein half-yardlands	free yardlands	total carucates
<b>Wolverley:</b>			0.5
Wolverley	4		1
Upton	8		0.75
The Lowe	4	1	0.5
Horsley	2	1	0.75
Woodhamcote	6		0.5
priest		2	<u>4.0</u>
<b>Cookley:</b>			1
Blakeshall	8		0.25
Debdale	2		0.5
Cookley	4		1
Caunsall	8		1.25
Austcliffe	8	1	0.5
The Lea		2	<u>4.5</u>