

Application Reference 25/000018/CM, Land Off Salt Way,
Feckenham, B96 6JT.

Retrospective application for the change of use from agricultural land to an inert aggregate processing facility; including the creation of a landscaped bund and native landscaping scheme.

Feckenham Parish Council have considered the details of the proposed development, together with the relevant planning history. We recommend that the application be refused on the following grounds:

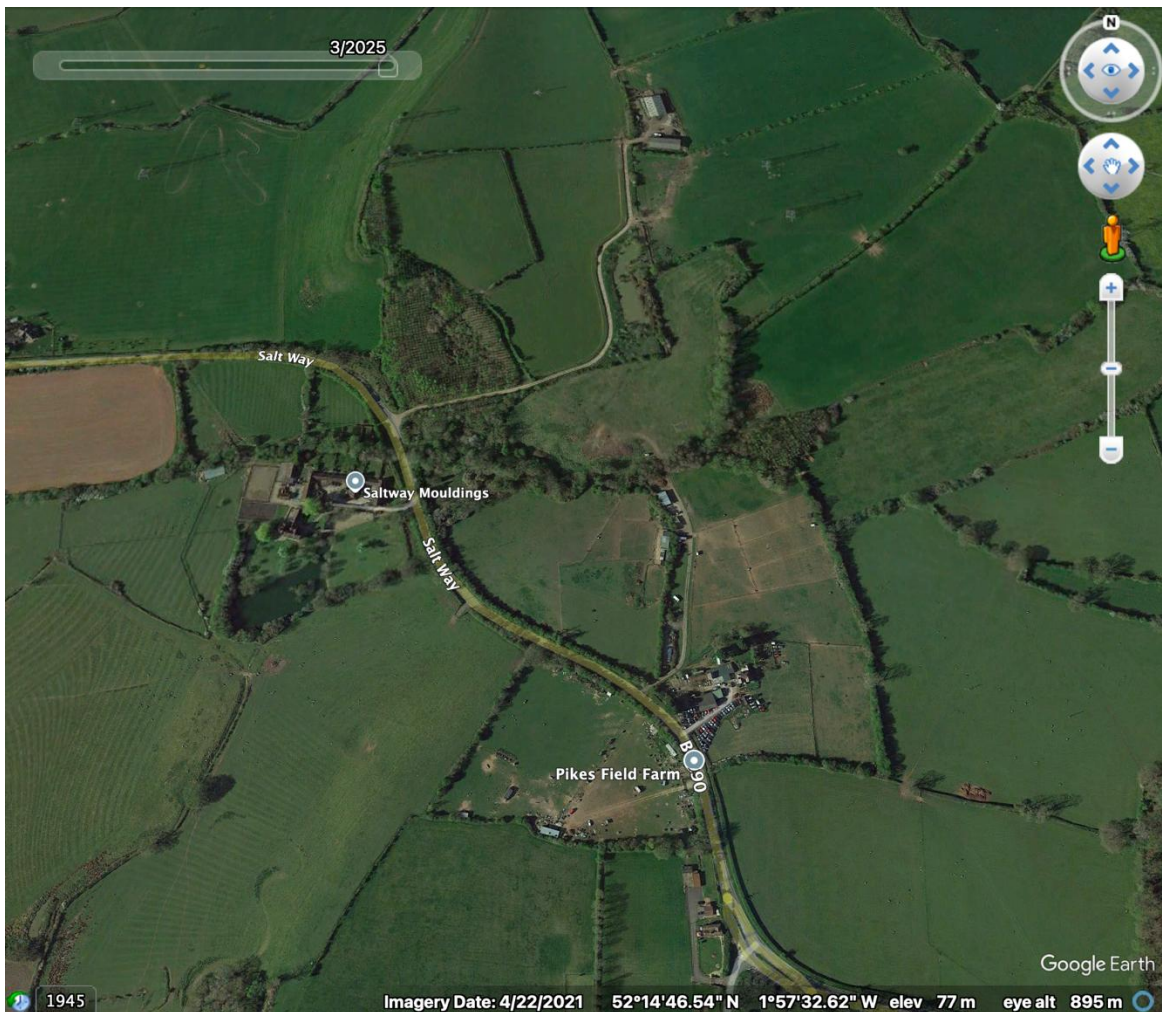
- The development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- It would set a dangerous precedent for inappropriate development, and create further challenges to the viability of using more suitable vacant brownfield or allocated sites for mineral processing in Worcestershire.
- There is no evidenced need or assessment to support the unlawful development.
- The development has had (and will have) a harmful landscape and visual impact.
- Insufficient information has been provided with the application relating to highways, drainage and arboriculture.
- Development on previously undeveloped land will have a negative impact on surface water drainage, pollution and water and flood management.
- It is contrary to national and Local Plan policies.

Our rationale is set out below for the reasons for refusal.

Retrospective Application

From the outset it is pointed out that the application is retrospective and the development is unauthorised. Therefore, contrary to the applicant's assertions in its Supporting Planning, Design and Access Statement, the application site is greenfield as opposed to brownfield land. As evidenced by aerial photographs it was undeveloped agricultural land at least as recently as 22/04/2021, before the unlawful development took place.

Figure 1: Extract from Google Earth Pro of the Application site in April 2021



(Accessed 10th February 2026)

To accept the applicant's position would be perverse as it would mean any prospective developer could benefit from developing and degrading greenfield sites unlawfully, in order that they gain brownfield land status for planning purposes. This would set a dangerous precedent. **The Council should immediately serve an Enforcement Notice on the landowner within the enforcement time limit to prevent the development from becoming lawful.**

We remind Officers that FPC initially brought the unlawful development to the attention of both Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council in August 2024. We notified both local authorities of the unlawful change of use from agricultural land to the inert aggregate processing facility. It is imperative the application is refused and enforcement action is pursued.

Green Belt

The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan does not allocate the site for mineral processing, and it also falls outside an identified strategic corridor. Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan Policy MLP 13 'Contribution of Substitute, Secondary and Recycled Materials and Mineral Waste to Overall Minerals Supply' states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that enable the supply of minerals from substitute, secondary or recycled materials or mineral waste where they accord with the policies of the Waste Core Strategy. Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire Policy WCS 13 'Green Belt' outlines that waste management facilities will be permitted in areas designated as Green Belt where the proposal does not constitute inappropriate development, or where very special circumstances exist.

This is supported by Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan Policy MLP 27 'Green Belt' which confirms that engineering operations (it is pointed out that the proposed development does not only entail an engineering operation) within the Green Belt will only be supported where a level of technical assessment appropriate to the proposed development demonstrates that, throughout its lifetime, the engineering operations will preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The proposal is a departure to the approved development plan, and it constitutes inappropriate development. The 'Landscape and Visual Appraisal' does not demonstrate that it has not harmed the openness of the countryside both visually and spatially or will not do so throughout its lifetime. In fact, it concludes that there are areas of 'high sensitivity'. It is not ancillary to on-site extraction, and the application includes extensive areas of hardstanding, storage, material stockpiles, machinery and vehicle parking. It also proposes a 3.0m high earth bund. The details provided with the application are limited but it is also anticipated that structures will be required to segregate waste for recycling, and staff welfare facilities will involve a building (or buildings) to be used for that purpose. This should be clarified with the applicant.

The development is not for one of the Green Belt development exceptions outlined in paragraph 154 of the NPPF as it fails to preserve its openness and it conflicts with paragraph 143 c) because it has led to encroachment into the countryside. It has undoubtedly harmed the openness of the Green Belt when paragraph 142 of the NPPF asserts that:

"The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence".

Furthermore, the application is not grey belt land as the mineral processing facility is unlawful and there is no demonstrable unmet need for this type of aggregate processing facility in Worcestershire. The adopted Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan and supporting evidence, including the Local Aggregates Assessment, do not identify any county-wide shortfall in processing capacity.

Neighbouring mineral planning authorities do not rely on Worcestershire to supply additional facilities, and the Minerals Local Plan made no allocations or safeguarding of new

processing sites, indicating that the evidence does not support a deficiency. Therefore, any claim that this facility is needed to meet local or county demand is unsupported and carries little weight in the planning balance, particularly given the harm to the Green Belt.

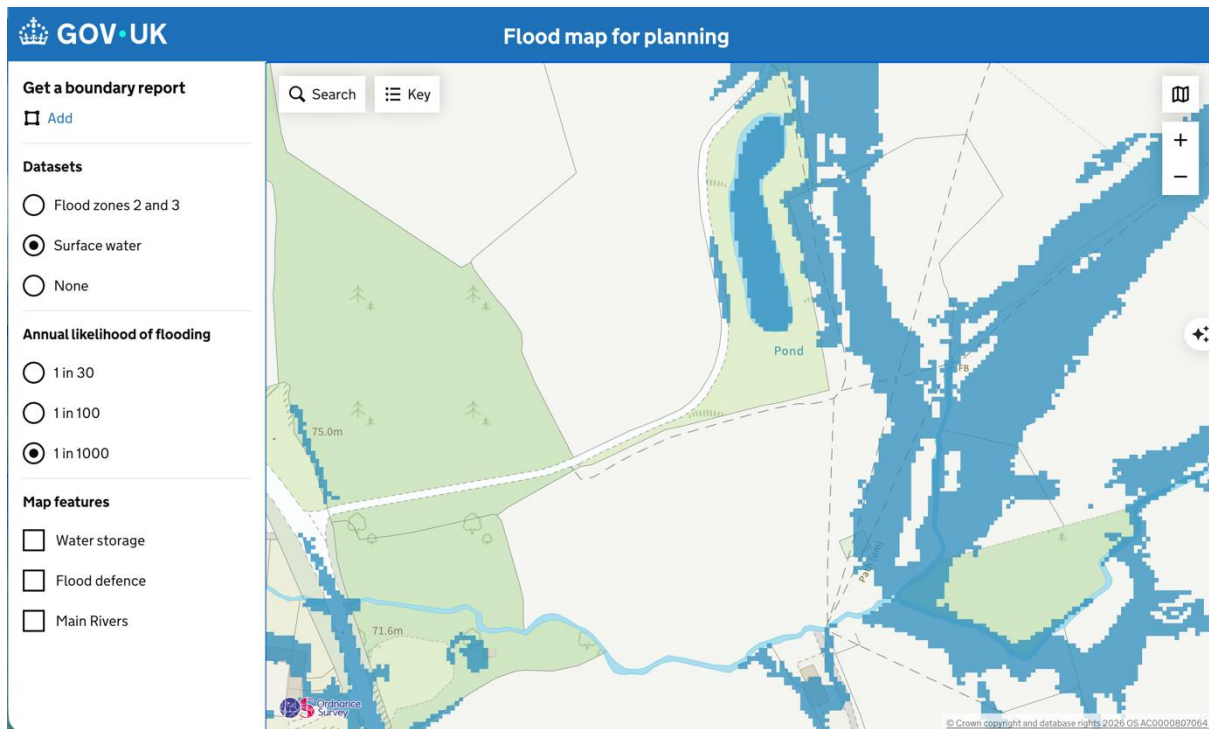
Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. No very special circumstances have been advocated in the applicant's Supporting Planning, Design and Access Statement.

Flood Risk

Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan Policy MLP 38 'Flooding' states that planning permission will be granted where it is demonstrated that the proposed mineral development will avoid increasing flood risk to people and property on site or elsewhere and contribute, where possible, to a reduction in overall flood risk. This is supported by Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire Policy WCS 10 'Flood risk and water resources' that outlines that waste management facilities will be permitted where it is demonstrated that the design of buildings, layout, landscaping and operation of the facility, and any restoration proposals, adequately consider flood risk.

The Planning Statement and Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) both accept there is surface water flood risk. However, the FRA submitted with the application inaccurately reports the extent of the surface water flood risk. It does not include the extent of the flood risk across the entire site. For completeness the following extract is taken from the Environment Agency flood risk map that shows the correct extent of the flood risk.

Figure 2: Environment Agency surface water flood risk map



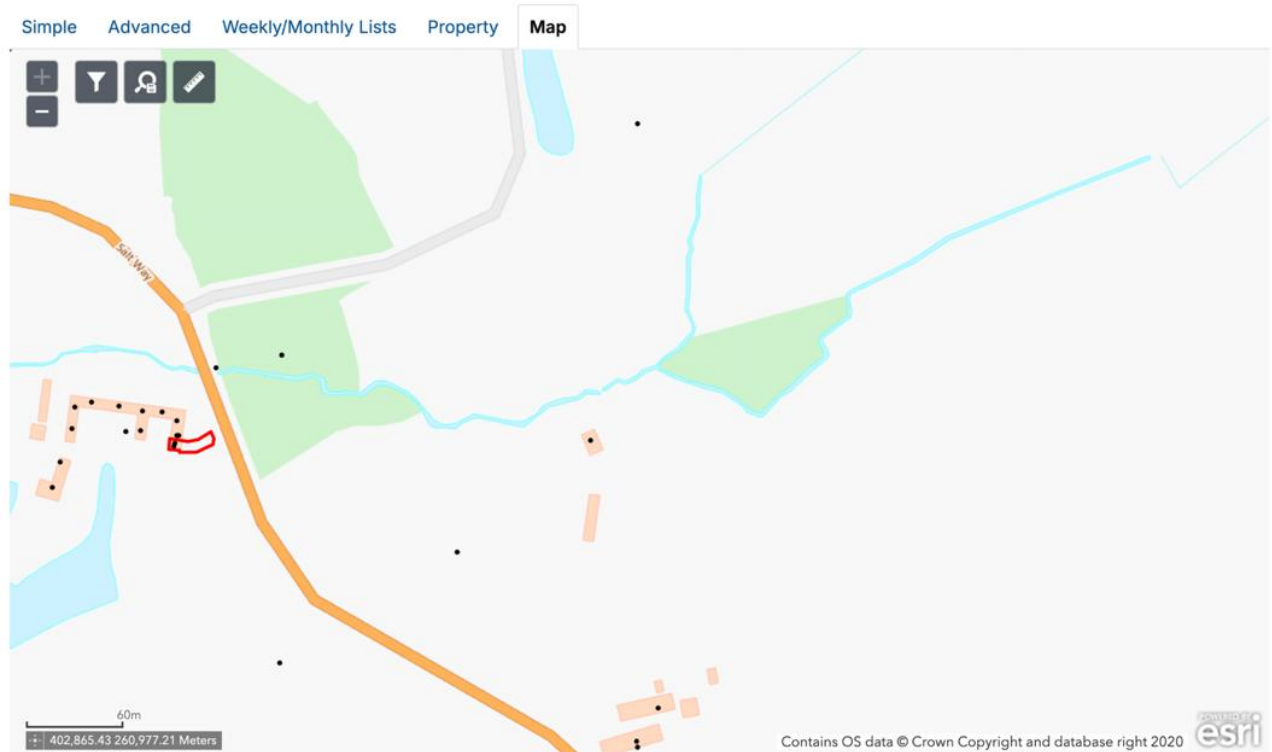
(Accessed 9th February 2026)

If the proposed drainage strategy has been prepared using the submitted FRA it may be inadequate and fail to address the full extent of the surface water flood risk. Surface water flood issues are already a significant problem for the area, and removal of a greenfield site that forms part of the natural surface water flood strategy for the area may exacerbate flood risk issues elsewhere in lower lying areas. This includes the residential properties to the south of the site. The following extract from Redditch Borough Council shows the proximity of residential properties to the application site, illustrated by a black dot.

The NPPF makes clear in Paragraph 170 that:

“Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future).”

Figure 3: Redditch Borough Council Mapping Data



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(Accessed 10th February 2026)

Landscape Impact

Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan policy MLP 33 'Landscape' states that planning permission will be granted where it is demonstrated that the proposed mineral development will conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the landscape. This is supported by Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire Policy WCS 12 'Local characteristics' that outlines that waste management facilities will only be permitted where they contribute positively to the character and quality of the local area and protect and enhance local characteristics.

The findings of the applicant's 'Landscape and Visual Appraisal' is clearly weighted to support the development. How the overall visual effects of the development, changing a greenfield site into a permanent brown waste processing facility with associated paraphernalia, can be deemed to be 'negligible' and of 'no change significance' is disingenuous.

To the contrary, the development has had a significant and harmful impact on landscape character and visual amenity. It has also been to the detriment of users of the five PROWs associated with the application site. The proposed landscaping will take many years to mature (if it survives), and the 3.0m high landscaped bund will appear as an artificial and engineered structure that is starkly at odds with its surroundings. Moreover, any suggestion that the bund will make the development acceptable in terms of its landscape and visual impact does not stand up to scrutiny. If planning tests were this simple every harmful application in the countryside would simply provide a bund.

It is unclear from the submission documents how the existing trees have been impacted. There is no Arboricultural Impact Assessment or proposed root protection plan to accompany the application. Zones A, C and D on the proposed site plan could lead to the compacting of soil having a detrimental impact on the health of the established mature trees forming part of the site boundary.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF requires that planning decisions recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, including trees and woodland.

Other Material Considerations

Highways: The application is not supported by a sufficient level of detail to consider the traffic impact of the unlawful development, both within and outside the application site, on highway operation or safety. This includes the impact of HGVs and other vehicles on rural road safety, capacity and amenity.

The applicant's Supporting 'Planning, Design and Access Statement' refers to the field track forming the route for the HGV's and other site traffic, suggesting there is space for 2 vehicles to pass, but without vehicle tracking and detailed highways plans it is not possible to substantiate this claim. Furthermore, the proposed site plan shows 'zone D' for vehicle parking and turning but there is no detail on the plan other than an indicative area.

The site plan also does not show the parking and storage areas of the crushing and other necessary machinery involved in the development, and there are no vehicle tracking details for on site or at the entrance to the main highway. In addition, the application does not include any detail about other highway matters including wheel washing etc.

If no further highways information is provided the application should be refused. Consideration should be given to whether it ought to be invalidated until a Transport Statement has been submitted as required by the Council's Validation Document for planning applications.

Climate Emergency: The business model is clearly unsustainable. It encourages additional vehicular movements from and between sites to process and manage waste with no evidence of proximity or typical distances travelled. As the Worcestershire County Council 'Worcestershire Local Aggregate Assessment: Data covering the period up to 31/12/2023' report makes clear:

"The method used to establish projections in the Waste Core Strategy assumed that development would initially be concentrated on previously developed (brownfield) land which would generate considerable volumes of C&D waste, and that over time more new development would take place on greenfield sites, resulting in the amount of C&D waste decreasing."

This most recent monitoring report makes clear that the projections are for a reduction in demand and that demand for such services should be on site. Worcestershire County Council declared a climate emergency in July 2021. The proposed development does not contribute to carbon reduction and enables a harmful industrial process in the open countryside, isolated from development or the industry it seeks to provide its services to.

Conclusion

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the application is clearly contrary to both the development plan and relevant guidance in the NPPF, and we strongly recommend that it is refused. There are no material considerations to justify a different decision.

Enforcement action should be pursued to ensure the land is restored to its previous condition before the unauthorised development took place.