

Lexi Dones

Pegasus Group

4 The Courtyard

Lockington

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DE74 2SL

**Project Ref:BG2.109**

Thursday, 18 September 2025

Dear Lexi,

**RE: Ecology Response for the site known as Land at Field Head, Markfield Lane, Markfield, Leicestershire, LE67 9PS.**

#### **Background**

Brindle and Green were asked to produce a response to recent comments from Cllr. David Snartt associated with the proposed development at Land at Field Head, Markfield (hereinafter referred to as 'the site'). Cllr. David Snartt has requested that the applicant (Pegasus Group) demonstrate how the priorities of the newly adopted Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) have been taken into account in the submission of an outline planning application for site clearance to facilitate the development of up to 115 residential properties with associated access and landscaping.

#### **Site Context**

The application site can be found at SK 5003 0981 and is located immediately to the southeast of Markfield, Leicestershire. The site comprises grazing pasture utilised year-round by horses separated by ditches and mature native hedgerows. The site is bound to the north and west by mature gardens associated with the residential properties along Markfield Lane. The south of the site is bound by the residential gardens of properties along Leicester Road.

Adjacent to the eastern boundary an area of ancient woodland, Lawn Wood was recorded. Ulverscroft Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies approximately 0.6km north of the site, designated for neutral grassland, heathland and woodland. Vegetative features, including hedgerows, ditches and woodland habitats are considered to provide connectivity between the site and the SSSI.

Brindle and Green undertook a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in 2022 during which all habitats within the site were recorded, with particular note given to those of elevated value, such as national and local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats, and Habitats of Principle Importance (HPI). A desk study was also incorporated into the PEA, which extended the search to assess notable habitats or sites in close proximity to the site. In addition to the PEA, species specific surveys were undertaken throughout 2022. These included;

- Wintering Bird Survey
- Breeding Bird Survey
- Bat Emergence Survey
- Bat Activity Survey
- Great Crested Newt Survey
- Reptile Survey
- Badger Survey
- Water Vole Survey

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Upon completion of all habitat and species-specific surveys, a full assessment of the ecological impacts was assessed and published within an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and supporting Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA).

#### ***Site Evaluation***

The habitat and species-specific surveys confirmed that bats, breeding birds, badgers, and herptiles had the potential to be negatively affected by the proposed development. A robust assessment was made and outlined within the EcIA. This included a range of appropriate mitigation measures which reduced the impact on habitats, designated sites, and relevant protected species to Neutral (Not Significant), in line with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM, September 2024).

As an undeveloped site, it is acknowledged that the proposals will result in the loss of existing grassland and losses to existing hedgerows (H3, H4, and H5).

Of elevated value within and adjacent to the site are ditches (D1, D2, and D3) and an offsite area of ancient woodland (Lawn / Old Woods ASNW) which is present directly to the east of the site. All of these features are to be retained and protected under the proposals, with an appropriate buffer to be incorporated within the site, adjacent to Lawn / Old Woods ASNW. It is considered that through appropriate protection to these features, their current condition will be maintained, and they will continue to hold significant ecological value.

It is understood that Cllr. David Snartt showed concern that "*this site contains grass land and brook (Fishpond Brook), development is likely to result in isolating ancient woodland/grassland and the loss of habitat*". Brindle and Green's view is that the grassland within the site is not functionally linked to the adjacent Lawn / Old Woods ASNW. As the grassland has been subject to heavy management and regular use from horses it has limited ecological value and provides few environmental benefits. Compensation for the lost grassland has been provided within the east of the site, adjacent to the Lawn / Old Woods ASNW. While this area is smaller than that lost, it is considered that through appropriate management and monitoring (secured through the production of a management plan), that these compensatory habitats will provide increased opportunities for wildlife, and other environmental benefits from those that are currently present. It is not the view of Brindle and Green that the Lawn / Old Woods ASNW will become fragmented. Lawn / Old Woods ASNW is located to the east of the site and extends a significant distance into the wider landscape. The surrounding landscape to the east consists of further woodland, and open grassland, while the landscape to the west of the site is dominated by existing development associated with Markfield.

While both biodiversity and the LNRS are material considerations to any planning application, further consideration must also be given to the need for additional housing. The Charnwood Core Strategy (adopted 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2015) cites a target of 13,940 new homes between 2011 and 2028. In order to achieve this target, there is a requirement to build houses. While it is often an aim to build on brownfield sites, this is not always achievable. Further, brownfield sites often have associated ecological and environmental benefits.

#### ***Demonstration of Priorities of LNRS***

The LNRS provides a strategic view of the issues and opportunities in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland and seeks to:

1. map the most valuable existing areas for nature
2. establish priorities, and
3. map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits.

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The relevant priorities outlined within the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy are as follows;

**WD011** - Follow best practice to control invasive non-native plant species and minimise the risk of introducing pests and diseases within woodlands.

Currently, the site contains rhododendron, variegated yellow archangel and cherry laurel, with rhododendron, and Cotoneaster also recorded to the south of the site. The proposals will see the removal and control of these species (secured through the production of an appropriate management plan) to ensure that they don't spread into the adjacent woodland.

**WD014** - Buffer priority wet woodlands with appropriate vegetated habitats to reduce incursion of pollutants.

The design proposals include a significant vegetative buffer at the eastern extent of the site in order to appropriately protect the adjacent woodland. While it is acknowledged that the adjacent woodland is not recorded as wet woodland, it has been recorded as ancient and requires protection.

**FW002** - Create and maintain new floodplain meadows to manage excess water and provide priority habitat for species, and **FW003** - Implement other natural flood management techniques to reduce flood risk and improve water retention. Such as re-meandering rivers, woodland and scrub planting, leaky dams, buffer strips, gully blocking and pond and scrape creation.

The proposals include the provision of a large Sustainable Urban Drainage system, to the eastern extent of the site. It is anticipated that this feature will be planted with a range of aquatic and marginal flora which not only alleviate the threat of flooding but also provide increased opportunities for wildlife and other environmental benefits.

**FW007** - Safeguard freshwater habitats and restore them to achieve favourable ecological status.

Each of the ditches (D1 – D3) within the site are to be retained under the proposals.

**GL002** - Create new or expand existing species rich grassland.

The proposals include the provision of species-rich grassland the eastern extent of the site. As the existing grassland within the site has been recorded as being species poor and in poor condition, the provision of grassland of elevated value will provide both ecological and environmental benefits.

**GL006** - Manage water levels and drainage within grasslands to maintain suitable conditions.

The scheme will see the creation of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System which will help manage water levels within the site, and surrounding area.

**GL007** - Control invasive plant species and encroaching scrub in grasslands.

Rhododendron, variegated yellow archangel and cherry laurel have all been recorded within the site. The proposals will see the removal and control of these species to ensure they do not further spread into the site or naturalised habitats within the local area.

**UB003** - Increase the urban tree canopy by planting native and climate-resilient tree species in streets, parks, and other public spaces to provide habitat, reduce urban heat islands, and improve air quality.

The proposals include the provision of a significant amount of native tree planting both within the site, and at the site's peripheries. Most notably at the eastern extent of the site. This will in turn increase the structural diversity within the site while also providing further environmental benefits.

**UB008** - Create and manage high quality sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) based on urban design expertise and following the Leicester City Technical Guidance (2021).

The development proposals include the provision of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System which will be managed and monitored for biodiversity and environmental benefits.

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**UB009** - Integrate biodiversity into urban planning and development processes and promote sustainable urban design practices that incorporate green spaces.

The proposals include a range of species-specific enhancements, such as bat, and bird boxes, and reptile hibernacula. The inclusion of these features is considered to provide increased and continued opportunities for a range of species and ensure that the development promotes the presence of protected and notable species.

**NN001** - Protect existing hedgerows and promote the planting of new native hedgerows and **NN004** - Use hedgerows to create wildlife corridors.

The proposals will see the retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows and tree lines within the site and at the site's peripheries. In addition, the proposals will see the lengthening of H1 to connect to TL2 to provide increased connectivity across the site. A sensitive lighting strategy will also be incorporated into the construction phase, and post development to ensure that these green corridors are utilised by bats.

**NN007** - Recognise the value of watercourse in urban spaces as unique connected habitats and manage them to keep them in favourable ecological conditions.

The existing ditch system (D1 – D3) will be retained and protected during the construction phase and post development to provide continued ecological and environmental benefits.

**NN011** - Enhance biodiversity along green corridors with native vegetation and wildflower meadows.

Green corridors within the site are most notable to the east of the site, and along the northern boundary. These features are to be retained and protected. Additionally, species-rich grassland is to be created adjacent to these features to provide increased ecological and environmental benefits.

#### *Conclusion*

It is considered that through robust assessment of the site, the baseline value of the site and the potential impacts on protected and notable species and habitats are understood. Through appropriate safeguarding measures, mitigation, compensation and enhancements, the impacts on habitats, designated sites, and a range of protected species has been reduced to Neutral (Not Significant) in line with CIEEM guidelines.

It is considered that the scheme has been designed in a way which clearly demonstrates the priorities outlined within the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and provides a range of ecological and environmental benefits.

Yours Sincerely,  
Dave Judson, MSc  
Consultant Ecologist  
Brindle and Green Ltd.

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