TECHNICAL NOTE: ECOLOGY

Gladman Developments Ltd.

Land South of Cunnery Close, Barlestone

November 20th 2026

BACKGROUND

This Ecology Technical Note has been produced by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd. in response to updated comments provided by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Ecology in relation to the Outline planning application (HBBC application ref: 26/00257/OUT) for the erection of up to 158 dwellings (all matters reserved).

Previous comments provided by LCC Ecology (response dated 20th April 2026) were considered within a Technical Note: Ecology June 2026 which should be read in conjunction with the below.

Appendix A (Cartographer spreadsheets) and Appendix B (Photos of offsite watercourse) have been submitted alongside this Technical Note and should be read in conjunction with the following comments.

For clarity, where considered suitable, LCC Ecology's comments are shown in *Blue italic* text with the subsequent FPCR response in black text.

The report states that six breeding bird surveys are required to be sufficiently robust to identify & estimate populations. While further information has been provided to show a reduced number of surveys is appropriate, only one breeding bird survey was completed. This is not enough to provide a representative conclusion of population sizes and species present. Therefore, further breeding bird surveys are required.

Part 1: Rationale for Reduced Survey Effort

The guidelines state that "*as standard it is recommended that six bird survey visits be undertaken as part of a survey for breeding birds*" and that "*any deviation in the number of surveys must be supported with detailed and robust justification […], fewer survey visits may be justified for projects with very limited impacts, or sites with habitats of low value for birds*".

The six-visit standard is derived from studies undertaken by the Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group that determined that this level of survey effort is "*considered sufficiently robust to identify the majority of bird species using lowland deciduous woodland in the breeding season and establish a good understanding of the numbers and distribution of species present*" as stated in the guidelines. The guidelines are therefore based on the standard survey effort required for robust assessment of the most complex habitats to survey where there is typically a high diversity of breeding species and the nature of the vegetation is such that there is a heavy reliance on vocal encounters during the survey.

Regard should also be given to British Standard BS42020:2013 "Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development" which states that "*the work involved in preparing and*

implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development".

Habitats for breeding birds within the Site are significantly less complex (intensively managed arable land and perimeter hedgerows) than those used in the development of the six-visit standard, which permits greater emphasis to be afforded to visual encounters, and lack any seasonally constrained features that may require additional consideration. Thus, a reduced survey effort is considered proportionate in line with British Standard BS42020:2013 where species detection is more efficacious.

The unsuitability of the Site for anything beyond generalist species is predicted by the size of Site and habitats present, as well as the broader context of the surrounding landscape and habitats. The single intensively managed arable field significantly limits biodiversity potential and the number of available niches, and is therefore of relatively low value to breeding birds.

Furthermore, the habitats within the Site are abundant locally and the small size of the Site (c.6.53ha) is such that it represents only a very small proportion of this habitat at the local scale. Therefore adverse impacts to breeding birds associated with the loss of arable habitats from within the Site to facilitate the proposed development are highly unlikely to be significant at local scale, or above, given the landscape context. Therefore, it is considered that a reduced level of survey is justifiable under the conditions outlined above.

As stated in the Combined Bird Survey Report (FPCR, 2026), the assemblage of breeding birds recorded in association with the Site was considered to be typical of the habitats present both within the Site and locally. A very low number of birds were recorded foraging within the arable field, which provided no breeding opportunities for any of the species recorded. The large majority of birds were recorded in association with the perimeter hedgerows, and the assemblage entirely comprised generalist bird species, found near-ubiquitously across a range of hedgerow and scrub habitats in a regional context. The large majority of hedgerows within the Site are to be retained and thus any adverse impacts associated with the proposed development would be limited to species less tolerant of suburban environs. Within the Site, such species are limited to stock dove *Columba oenas*, the population of which was very small (two individuals) and therefore any adverse impact on these species would be negligible.

Furthermore, the green infrastructure proposals include green buffers with areas of scrub planting, attenuation and creation of species-rich native hedgerow. These measures will create more improved habitats for breeding bird species associated with hedgerows, thereby further reducing the potential for any significant impacts on species within the associated breeding bird assemblage.

The proposed development is therefore likely to have negligible to no significant adverse impact on the assemblage of breeding birds given the retention of suitable habitats and that the habitats to be lost to development are only of very low value for breeding birds. The resultant negligible adverse impacts to breeding bird species further justifies a reduced survey effort in accordance with the guidelines as set out above.

Part 2: Timing of Survey

The Site has low suitability for any assemblage of breeding or foraging birds beyond the identified generalist bird species which were observed within the Site during the survey, and for this generalist assemblage, it does not present a significant or isolated breeding and foraging resource.

Whilst surveys for breeding birds were not scoped-out of the assessment entirely due to the potential presence of some Species of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 which may utilise such habitats e.g. farmland bird species such as skylark, which needs regard given by decision-makers, the easily-detectable nature of these species is such that a single visit, at the appropriate time of year, is sufficient to identify presence/absence and inform the rationale for reduced survey effort outlined above.

The survey was carried out in April which falls within the peak of breeding bird season. The timing of the survey was specifically chosen as any species known to begin breeding earlier (mostly resident species with protracted breeding seasons such as blackbird *Turdus merula* or long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*) would still be feeding nestlings and/or have recently fledged young at this time and therefore be captured by the survey. Conversely, any species which are known to breed later into the season (typically migrant species such as whitethroat *Curruca communis*) would be sufficiently established in set breeding territories during late April that any breeding behaviours would be indicative of territories rather than passage migrants.

Furthermore, the Site is outside the breeding ranges of most species with atypically early breeding seasons (e.g. woodlark *Lullula arborea*) and does not support suitable habitat for any such species for which it is within said range (e.g. grey heron *Ardea cinerea* or raven *Corvus corax*), and therefore, the timing of the survey undertaken will detect breeding birds for which there is a reasonable likelihood of presence given the location of, and habitats within, the Site.

We therefore maintain that a single survey in April provides the necessary information to make a sufficiently robust assessment and permit the Local Planning Authority to meet its obligations under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 for this planning application.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that as part of the previous application for the site (HBBC application ref: 20/00102/OUT), a single scoping breeding bird survey was undertaken, which identified a similar bird assemblage to the 2026 assessment providing further confirmation of the validity of the findings.

Further information is needed regarding the MoRPh assessments as there was only one RCA baseline result when there were three different sections of the watercourse. Please can the condition scores be completed for all three sections to match the BNG metric.

The condition score was provided with the previous submitted Technical Note response within the Net Gain Report at Appendix C. The riparian encroachment levels of the watercourse differ due to the bank top habitats present and therefore the watercourse has been split into three sections within the metric however the condition score remains consistent across the sections.

A Guide to Assessing River Condition (A.M. Gurnall, 2021) describes the 'MoRPh' survey used in the River Condition Assessment should aim to survey c.20% of the total river length with the area of the proposed development. Therefore, due to the short stretch of watercourse that falls

to the southern boundary of the site, a single MoRPh5 was considered to be representative for this assessment. As the watercourse was found to be consistent along the length, and no major changes to bank profiles, substrate or water flows were identified, the condition assessment provided applies to all three sections split within the metric, which as discussed were split on the basis of varying encroachment levels.

Please can the cartographer information as well as further photos of each river section (including upstream & downstream) be provided.

The downloaded spreadsheets can be found in Appendix A. Additional photographs of the offsite watercourse can be found in Appendix B.

While the GCN District Level Licence Impact Assessment & Conservation Payment Certificate is attached in the EcIA report, it is missing a signature in section 6. Please can this be provided.

The box under the signature states "*For electronic applications, please insert an electronic signature above or tick this box to confirm with the declaration:*" this has been ticked and therefore the signature is not required.

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Appendix B: Photographs of Offsite Watercourse

The below photographs show examples of the watercourse recorded offsite.



Photograph 1: Eastern section 'upstream' view



Photograph 2: Eastern section



Photograph 3: Eastern section 'downstream' view



Photograph 4: Eastern section



Photograph 5: Western section 'upstream' view



Photograph 6: Western Section



Photograph 7: Western section 'downstream' view



Photograph 8: Western Section

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