

The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust upholds that development should not come at the expense of our natural environment. All development, be it housing or commercial must be designed and delivered in a way that contributes to nature's recovery, not its decline.

25/00931/FUL

Development of a logistics park for storage and distribution (Class B8), general industry (Class B2), ancillary office space (Class E) and associated infrastructure

Cliffe Hill Farm Little Shaw Lane Markfield Leicestershire LE67 9PP

Summary:

The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) object to the proposed scheme due to the proposed loss of grassland habitat that meets Local Wildlife Site selection criteria and is therefore of significant ecological value. The grassland fields (F1-F3), in the south-eastern corner of the site, support a semi-natural mixed mesotrophic grassland community characterised by a suite of indicator species typical of species-rich neutral meadow, alongside wet grassland associates in parts of the sward. This combination is specifically recognised under the Local Wildlife Site Mixed Grassland criterion, where qualifying species from mesotrophic and wet-grassland indicator lists are assessed together. All three fields exceed the minimum area threshold and support sufficient indicator species to meet this criterion, with Fields F1 and F2 particularly strong, and F3 contributing. The habitat is further supported by hedgerow boundaries and proximity to other semi-natural and designated sites, making it an important component of the local ecological network in the Ulverscroft Valley in the Charnwood Forst. The grasslands should therefore be regarded as a locally significant habitat resource and afforded protection and enhancement within the planning process.

Comments:

The grasslands surveyed in Fields F1, F2 and F3 form a coherent resource of mixed mesotrophic grassland, with a sward composition that includes a strong suite of characteristic meadow species alongside indicators of seasonally damp conditions. Quadrat data show that each field supports multiple species listed as indicators of semi-natural neutral grassland, including plants such as knapweed, meadow vetchling, bird's-foot-trefoil, great burnet and red clover. In addition, parts of the grassland, particularly within F2, contain species associated with wetter ground, such as marsh thistle, jointed rush and marsh bedstraw. This combination of mesotrophic and wet grassland species is precisely the situation described in the Local Wildlife Site guidance for Mixed Grassland, where thresholds are assessed using the combined species lists relevant to both habitat types.

Although the fields fall marginally below the Primary threshold for purely mesotrophic grassland on List-F species counts alone, once the wet-grassland indicator species are appropriately included, **the grasslands meet the Local Wildlife Site criteria for Mixed Grassland**. All compartments exceed the minimum area requirement, and each contains a qualifying number of indicator species drawn from the relevant combined lists. Field F2 is particularly strong in this respect and F1 is also a consistent example. F3 is slightly more improved in places but still supports a qualifying indicator assemblage.

This ecological value is strengthened by the structural and landscape context of the site. The grasslands are bounded by hedgerows and mature vegetation that provide continuity of habitat for invertebrates, small mammals and birds. The site also lies within an especially valuable network of other semi-natural grasslands and designated wildlife sites in the surrounding landscape, making it an important part of local ecological connectivity. The guidance for Local Wildlife Site selection explicitly recognises such networks and mosaics as important in maintaining functioning biodiversity at the local scale.

Taken together, the floristic composition, presence of wet-grassland indicators, field extent, and landscape connectivity demonstrate that the x3 south-eastern grasslands form a locally significant habitat extent. They meet the criteria for consideration as a Local Wildlife Site under the Mixed Grassland selection standard. As such, **these LWS grasslands should be treated as valued habitat in the planning process and be fully retained, protected and enhanced.**

Ben Devine

(Head of Nature Recovery - LRWT)

17th November 2025