

Re: Ecological Statement Discharge of Condition 7.

Caterpillar UK Ltd Peckleton Lane, Dersford, Leicester, LE9 9JT

Associated with Planning Application 24/00969/FUL

This report outlines the proposed off-site tree planting associated with the development, located within the wider ownership boundary of Caterpillar. The proposal identifies four distinct planting areas, all situated off-site, intended to contribute to biodiversity net gain and to meet relevant planning conditions.

Site Assessment and Baseline Conditions

A site assessment was undertaken in 2024, which determined that the proposed planting areas consist of modified grassland in a poor condition. The assessment found that the habitat failed to meet the criteria under Condition A and, in accordance with standard ecological assessment methodologies, it has therefore been classified as *Poor Condition Modified Grassland*.

Proposed Off-Site Planting Strategy

The proposal includes four individual planting areas, collectively covering a total of 9,245 m². Within this area, a total of 230 trees are proposed to be planted. The existing underlying habitat, modified grassland, will be retained, resulting in an average planting density of approximately 40 m² per tree.

All trees will be of small stature at the time of planting. It is anticipated that, over a 30-year period, these trees will develop to a *small size with moderate condition*. This progression will be supported through an appropriate long-term management plan, which will be detailed further in the habitat and management plan SQ- 3874.

The underlying modified grassland is expected to remain in *poor condition* throughout the 30-year period. Management practices will ensure that the habitat continues to support a typical composition for its classification, including species such as bracken and bramble. These species naturally occur beneath tree canopies and are compatible with the ecology of modified grassland, particularly under light to moderate shading conditions.

Habitat Integrity and Long-Term Impact

The proposed tree density is not anticipated to negatively affect the underlying grassland. Due to the moderate shading levels associated with small trees and the resilience of modified grassland, the habitat is expected to persist and evolve without significant degradation. Natural succession may allow for gradual diversification of the ground flora, but the habitat is still expected to be classified as modified grassland in poor condition at the conclusion of the 30-year management period.

Conclusion

The proposed off-site planting of 230 small trees across 9,245 m² of modified grassland in poor condition is designed to enhance biodiversity without compromising the integrity of the existing habitat. The retention of the modified grassland, alongside the introduction of appropriate tree species at a suitable density, ensures compatibility and ecological sustainability over the long term.

Yours faithfully,

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