

Land at Ratby Lane, Markfield

December 2025

The Site lies within the National Forest, and the proposals have been developed to reflect this important context. The masterplan adopts a landscape-led approach, carefully shaped to respect the surrounding character and integrate the development into its natural setting. This note responds to the comments provided by the National Forest Company's Green Infrastructure & Planning Manager on 28 July 2025, as well as the discussions held during a meeting with a National Forest representative on 18 September 2025, ensuring that the design approach aligns with their guidance and reflects the aspirations for continued landscape and biodiversity enhancement across the area.

1.0 National Forest Context and Design Approach

- 1.1 Policy 21 of the adopted Core Strategy requires developments within the National Forest to reflect the Forest context in their landscape proposals and contribute to the delivery of the National Forest Strategy. The policy also stipulates that siting and scale must relate appropriately to the Forest setting, respect the wider countryside's character, and avoid adverse impacts on existing facilities or the working landscape. The policy refers to the National Forest Company Guide for Developers and Planners. For residential schemes of this size (0.5–10ha), at least 20% of the site must be dedicated to forest green space as clarified by the Good Design Guide SPD.
- 1.2 The National Forest for Developers and Planners Summary Guide identifies suitable components of forest related green infrastructure, it states that Forest-related green infrastructure can consist of some or all of the following elements depending on the character of the Site and its surroundings:
 - New woodland planting (ideally a minimum size of 0.25ha)
 - Creation of woodland belts (minimum of 15m wide)
 - Planting to form parkland style landscapes
 - Ecologically designed sustainable drainage systems
 - Creation of new habitats (wetlands, reedbeds, meadows, heathlands)
 - Incorporation and management of existing woodland and hedgerows
 - Greenways - landscaped footpath and cycle routes
 - Roadside trees
 - Development landscaping with a strong tree emphasis
 - Incorporation of heritage features

2.0 Green Infrastructure Provision

- 2.1 The proposals deliver 1.64 hectares of green infrastructure, around 26% of the Site, exceeding the minimum requirement set out in the *Good Design Guide SPD*. This provision includes SuDS features, a woodland-themed children's play area, public open space with new recreational routes and tree planting, enhanced woodland areas (both new and existing), as well as grass verges and pocket greens with street trees. Of this, approximately 0.65ha will be set aside as woodland, surpassing the 0.25ha minimum recommended in the *National Forest Company Guide for Developers and Planners*. The woodland-themed play facilities and street tree planting are consistent with the comments received on 28 July 2025.
- 2.2 This woodland will form a connected block of complementary habitats, strengthening ecological links with existing woodland to the west, east, and south. Woodland belts will extend and vary in depth to blend with surrounding existing woodland, creating a more organic and natural form.
- 2.3 Ecologically designed attenuation basins will be located alongside woodland planting, offering both permanently wet and seasonally wet areas to maximise biodiversity and contribute to the National Forest planting. A woodland-themed children's play area will be integrated within the woodland planting, supporting opportunities for natural play in a forested setting.

3.0 The Good Design Guide

- 3.1 The Good Design Guide promotes the creation of a National Forest setting by applying green infrastructure principles to deliver a strongly wooded development and a treed public realm. It encourages the creation and management of woodland, parkland landscapes, SuDS, new habitats (such as wetlands and meadows), and greenways, tailored to the site context.
- 3.2 The masterplan incorporates many of these principles. Existing vegetation will be retained and enhanced with native tree, thicket, and woodland edge planting, as well as wildflower grassland/scrub planting to enrich habitats. Public open spaces will feature native plants, wildflowers, and grasses, enhancing biodiversity and reflecting the National Forest character.

4.0 Connectivity, Biodiversity, and Integration

- 4.1 Green spaces have been designed to create an interconnected habitat network, improving ecological connectivity while offering residents opportunities to engage with nature. Existing boundary hedgerows and woodland will be enhanced to maintain wildlife corridors. Two attenuation basins will be integrated into the green

infrastructure to manage surface water sustainably, while also delivering biodiversity gains through wet and seasonally wet habitats.

- 4.2 The green infrastructure connects with adjoining ecological networks and footpath/cycleway routes, ensuring new habitats and wildlife corridors link with the wider landscape. Biodiversity net gain has been supported by adjusting some higher-scoring habitats to allow for increased woodland planting, further advancing National Forest objectives and aligning with the comments from the meeting with the National Forest representative and those received on 28 July.

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 The proposals adopt a landscape-led approach appropriate to the National Forest, informed by comments from the National Forest Company's Green Infrastructure & Planning Manager (28 July 2025) and follow-up discussions with a National Forest representative (18 September 2025). The scheme exceeds the requirements of Policy 21 by delivering 1.64ha (26%) of green infrastructure, including 0.42ha of new woodland and 0.23ha of retained on-site woodland. These areas connect with adjacent off-site woodland, strengthening habitat connectivity.
- 5.2 Key components include woodland belts of varied depth, ecologically designed SuDS featuring wet and seasonally wet habitats, and a woodland-themed children's play area. Collectively, these interventions enhance biodiversity, reinforce habitat corridors, and integrate with wider ecological and recreational networks. The additional information provided demonstrates that the proposals address the comments issued by the National Forest on 28 July 2025.

