

TECHNICAL NOTE: ADDITIONAL ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Desford Road, Ratby

Planning Reference Number: 24/01090/REM

January 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This technical note has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. (FPCR) on behalf of Bellway Homes Limited (East Midlands) and details the findings of an update walkover survey for the proposed development of land at Desford Road, Ratby (hereafter referred to as the 'Site' (central OS grid reference: SK 51137 05300).
- 1.2 The aims of the technical note are to inform Leicestershire County Council (LCC) of any significant ecological changes, with particular focus on any protected species.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 A site visit was undertaken by an experienced ecologist from FPCR on 8th January 2025.
- 2.2 Habitat survey methods followed UKHab methodology and comprised a systematic walk over the site to classify the broad habitat types. Any habitats suitable for, or features with the potential to support, protected or notable species including amphibians, reptiles and breeding birds was also assessed and recorded with during the survey.
- 2.3 Over the survey particular attention was given to confirming the presence or likely absence of badgers within the site and accessible land within 30m were searched for evidence of badger *Meles meles* activity. The methodology employed followed that outlined by Harris, Creswell and Jefferies¹.

3.0 RESULTS AND ASSESSMENT

Habitats

- 3.1 The habitats on site are unchanged and are consistent with submitted Ecological Impact Assessment² and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment³. The site is still comprised of low value cereal crop, which can now be seen as winter stubble, with small parcels of bramble scrub in the northeast, northwest and southwest corners of the field. The area of other neutral grassland was still present in the south-eastern corner of the site which is now partially submerged with standing water. The native hedgerows that border the field are still unchanged. Sections of the ditch beneath H2 supported permanent water frozen at the time of the survey, and the ditch alongside H3 was partially wet at its eastern end.

¹ Harris, S., Cresswell, P. & Jefferies, D. 1989. *Surveying for Badgers*. Occasional Publication of the Mammal Society No. 9.

² CSA Environmental 2021. *Ecological Impact Assessment, Desford Lane, Ratby*. CSA/5249/05.

³ FPCR 2024. *Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Desford Road, Ratby*.

Badger

- 3.2 The site walkover recorded no evidence of badger activity within the site boundary. One partially used mammal run was noted in the eastern section of hedgerow H1, and another was found within the south section of hedgerow H2. However, this evidence was not accompanied by any further field signs and the mammals runs could have been created by other wild fauna. Opportunities for sett building are also reduced by flood risk in the eastern and southern areas of the site.
- 3.3 Whilst no active badger setts and no badger activity was recorded at the time of the survey a pre-commencement survey of the site should be undertaken to identify and changes of badger activity on/adjacent to site, in particular if any new setts have been created. In addition, the below best working practices must be adhered to during the construction phase:
- In order to prevent any badger becoming trapped within any footings / trenches left unfilled overnight these should be profiled to allow an escape route. If this is not feasible, sturdy wooden planks will be placed within each trench at the end of each working day, or otherwise one end of the trench is to be re-profiled to provide a ramp by which trapped animals may escape.
 - Any pipework used within the development site with a diameter of 150mm or above will be capped at the end of each working day.
 - The site manager will ensure the above procedures are carried out at the end of each working day until the completion of all ground works is complete.

Amphibians and Reptiles

- 3.4 The ecological survey work to support the granting of outline planning permission did not identify the presence of great crested newts in ponds or areas of standing water adjacent to the Site. Given the condition of the terrestrial habitat have not significant improved since the granting of outline planning permission, thus the presence of this species is still considered to be unlikely.
- 3.5 The dominant habitat across the site remains intensively managed arable land which is sub-optimal to support common species of reptiles. The extent of hedgerows and scrub has not increased since completion of the previous survey and sections provide suitable commuting, foraging, and sheltering habitat if reptiles are locally present. The area of other neutral grassland found southeast of the site also provides suitable habitat for reptiles, but the suitability of sheltering reptiles in this area is reduced by extensive winter flooding.
- 3.6 Given the previous survey results and the stable nature of the habitats it is unlikely that a significant assemblage of reptiles would be present within the Site. If reptiles were present any population would be limited to the small areas suitable habitats present within the Site and to avoid potential killing or injury, it is advised that precautionary working measures should be employed for the clearance of boundary vegetation including the removal of hedgerow H7 as specified in the Ecological Impact Assessment. These areas should remain undisturbed until the active reptile season (April-October, inclusive) and during suitable conditions (e.g. no rain with temperatures exceeding 10°C).

Other Notable Species

- 3.7 A small number of birds were recorded within the arable, and hedgerow and scrub habitats on site. These were common and widespread species such as carrion crow *Corvus corone* and woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*.
- 3.8 Again, there has been no significant change to quality of the baseline habitats which would significantly increase the quantum of suitable habitats for breeding birds. Given the inherent design of the proposals, including those submitted at the outline stage, provides significant scrub and hedgerow planting, it is not considered that further survey work would significantly alter the overall design of the proposals.
- 3.9 To ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, any removal of vegetation during the bird nesting period will require a pre-commencement check by a suitably qualified ecologist to determine if any active nests are present. There is also some risk to ground nesting birds and therefore a ground nesting bird check would also be required if the vegetation clearance is completed over the main bird nesting period.
- 3.10 No signs of activity of any other notable species such as riparian mammals were recorded within the site boundary at the time of the survey.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Habitats within the site have not changed and are consistent with previous survey findings. Additionally, no active badger setts and no badger activity was recorded at the time of the survey and are therefore not considered to be a constraint to development. Precautionary methods are nevertheless proposed.
- 4.2 As no other notable species were recorded and no changes to habitat baseline are found at the time of the survey no additional ecological constraints on development are expected.

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