



Review of Ecological and Arboricultural Reports
Land adjacent to Lutterworth Road
Blaby
Leicestershire
NGR SP56568 96629

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On behalf of
Davidsons Developments Ltd.

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Review of the PEA and BS5837 Arboricultural reports for land off Lutterworth Road

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Part 1: Site Details

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Details and Location

The site surveyed comprises an irregular parcel of land previously occupied by allotments on the northern side and an area of Golf Course on the southern side, divided by an established footpath. The land is situated on the eastern side of Lutterworth Road, Blaby centred at NGR SP56568 96629. The location of the site is shown on the plan within **Figure 1** and an aerial photograph has been provided within **Figure 2** to place the site in context.

Davidson’s Developments Ltd has commissioned a review of previous ecology and arboricultural surveys completed for this site (report references P2129 / 0721 /02 dated 19 July 2021 and report reference P2129 /0721 /01 dated 19 July 2021) as part of a due diligence exercise. In addition, a separate Biodiversity Impact Assessment report and calculation has been prepared for the site (report reference P2129 / 0721 /03 dated 22 July 2021) which has also been reviewed. As part of this review the site was inspected again on the 18 April 2023. A photographic record of the site and any key locations is provided in Section 3.

Date	Time	Location	Weather
18 April 2023	10.20am	Former allotments to the rear of Lutterworth Road Blaby.	Clear sky with occasional cloud. Wind 13mph from the north east. Temperature 11°C. Humidity 65% at 1031hPa.
Accessibility	All areas of the site accessible to search for evidence of protected species.		

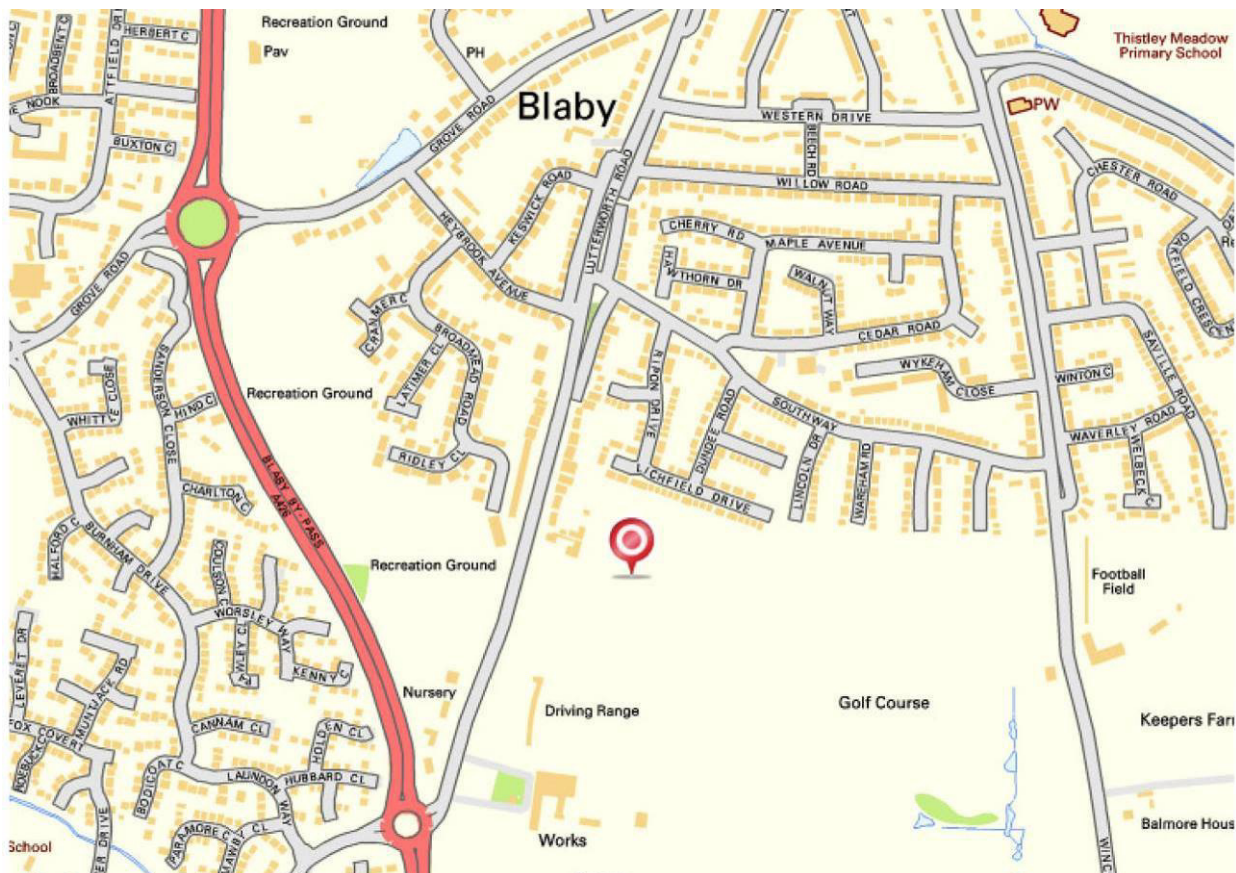


Figure 1: Site location.

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The defined site area is divided into two sections. On the north side of the central footpath is an area of disused allotments which were previously overgrown during the 2019 survey of the site

but which were cleared of dense vegetation in 202 and are slowly becoming recolonized by grassland, bramble and nettle. Within this area there are some significant trees around the boundaries and areas where birch and ash have seeded.

On the southern side of the footpath is the golf course within which the trees and grounds are intensively managed. A number of trees have been deliberately planted here to provide boundary screening and divided up fairways.

1.2 Objective of the Report

This report is a review of the previous ecological and arboricultural survey and assessment reports prepared for the site area. The objective of this review is to determine, through assessment of the original reports and also a new site inspection completed in April 2023, whether the original reports still accurately characterise the area surveyed and measure the biodiversity value of this, and identify any significant changes that may have occurred.

The site has been the subject of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal completed by CBE Consulting ecology (report reference P2129 / 0721 /02 dated 19 July 2021 – PEA July 2021) based on inspection completed in July 2021. A separate Arboricultural report to BS5837:2012 was also prepared (report reference P2129 /0721 /01 dated 19 July 2021). An application is being made to use this land for residential development.



Figure 2: Contextual Aerial Photograph. Copyright 2023 Microsoft Corporation

Part 2: Previous Survey and Biodiversity Assessment

2. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The PEA July 2021 followed the most up to date survey guidance and methodology in accordance with NPPF 2019 (current at that time) and CIEEM Survey Guidelines BS42020. The PEA July 2021 identified that *“the site is not a statutory or non-statutory site. There are a small number of Parish / District level ecological sites within 1km and also a number of Local Wildlife Sites within this search radius.”* This has not changed in the intervening period.

At the time of the 2021 inspection the following habitats and evidence / potential for protected species were identified at the site:

Habitats:

- Amenity Grassland (Golf Course)
- Boundary Hedgerows with trees
- Juvenile Woodland (Golf Course)
- Former Allotments

The PEA 2021 report describes the survey area as comprising a *‘Golf Course is an area that is intensively managed. The majority of the land within the area being considered for development comprises closely mown fairways dominated by amenity grasses. The allotment areas were previously cultivated but have fallen into disuse in recent years. Large areas of the allotments are now being colonised. Large areas are now under either dense bramble or dense sapling trees’.*

The former allotment area and land adjacent to the footpath had become overgrown and support a number of mature and semi-mature trees: *“There are a number of mature Ash trees of significant stature within the survey area. These are located along the front of the site facing Lutterworth Road, along the footpath running across the centre of the site, and on the eastern boundary of the allotment area.*

The PEA 2021 also records that *“There are two boundary hedgerows, one along Lutterworth Road and the other at the eastern end of the Golf Course adjacent to the footpath. Neither hedgerow is classified as important’ under the Hedgerow Regulations Guidelines”.*

Habitat connectivity from the Site was considered quite poor as the area is bounded by housing and roads to three sides and an intensively managed golf course on the remaining side. A copy of the 2021 Habitat Survey Plan is provided as **Appendix 1**.

Protected Species / BAP Species:

The records of protected species were obtained and reviewed within the PEA 2021 and a further review of the records within the National Biodiversity Network for this area has been carried out. The potential for protected species has been assessed following a review of the records available for this area and an inspection of the site area. The table below summarises this assessment.

Species	Present within 2km	Suitable habitat on site / evidence of presence	Likelihood of presence on site	Further surveys or mitigation recommended
Nesting Birds	Yes	Boundary hedgerows may provide suitable foraging and nesting locations.	Moderate	YES – assessment of vegetation prior to removal
Reptiles	Yes	A reptile presence / absence survey completed across the site in 2017 identified only one Common Lizard on four of the survey inspections. The former allotments are overgrown and would provide suitable habitat for reptiles	Moderate	YES – Working methods to avoid harm to reptiles are recommended following the presence/ absence survey completed.

Amphibians	Yes	The Golf Course area is intensively managed and there are no ponds close to the site. The allotment area contains no ponds or wetland areas to entice amphibians into the survey area.	Low	No
Bats	Yes	There are no structures within the site area to offer potential to support roosting bats. Some trees along the allotment boundaries have LOW potential. The golf course and allotment area are likely to support foraging bats.	Moderate	YES - An activity survey is recommended. Any tree with low roost potential to be removed will need further surveys
Badger and larger mammals	No	The allotment area is too overgrown and isolated. The golf course is intensively managed and provides only limited potential for foraging. present within the site. Hedgerows may provide limited foraging opportunities.	Low	No

Birds: The allotment area, previously overgrown by dense bramble and ruderals as cleared and at the time of the 2021 survey there was little cover for ground nesting birds across this area. However, the vegetation has started to recover as can be seen on the photographs later in this report taken in April 2023. The potential presence of nests may be anticipated in the future within the boundary hedgerows and trees. ***Measures to avoid disturbance to any nests or nesting activity will need to be considered within any development.***

Reptiles: This site has previously been the subject of a stage 2 reptile presence / absence survey completed in May 2017.

The presence / absence survey identified “*a small population of Common Lizard present in the north-western corner and western boundary of the Golf Course. No other species of reptile were found during the survey and no reptiles were found in any part of the allotment area during the course of either survey period. The number of reptiles found was consistently low with only one Common Lizard being found on four occasions out of the eleven survey visits. The location of the reptiles was also quite consistent being concentrated in one part of the Golf Course between Felts 4 – 7.*”

The 2017 reptile survey concluded that:

“.....any removal of vegetation within this small area of the site should take into account the presence of the reptiles and a methodology to protect these and ensure they can escape for the area should be prepared. In addition, any development of the site should consider incorporating artificial refugia along the Golf Course boundary as part of mitigation to reduce the potential impact on local biodiversity.”

There are no recent records of reptiles in this area and the habitat within the survey area and on land adjacent to this has not changed. There is no reason to consider the finding of the previous reptile survey are no longer accurate and it should be anticipated that there may be a small population of Common Lizard and other individual reptiles scattered around the site area.

Amphibians: There are no recent records of Great Crested Newts in the area and the intensively managed Golf Course does not offer good terrestrial habitat for amphibians including Great Crested Newts although there are ponds within this land further to the south. Considering the poor the terrestrial habitat for amphibians within the northern part of the Golf Course and the isolation of the allotment area caused by this and the residential housing to the north, the potential for Great Crested Newts to be present within the site is considered to be low. ***Further surveys for Great Crested Newts are not recommended.***

Chiroptera: There are known to be bats foraging in the area and known roosts within suitable locations within Blaby and nearby villages. The Golf Course provides a potentially excellent foraging area for bats and the local gardens can also provide linear foraging routes for species such as Pipistrelle. This was confirmed by the activity survey completed in September 2020. Five species of bats were identified foraging around the golf course and former allotment land. The site contains no structures with potential for roosting bats and no roosts were identified on any of the mature boundary trees.

Invertebrates: The area assessed does not appear to support a diverse range of flora and is not a location with a high density of nectar producing plants. The potential for a significant assemblage of invertebrates to be present in this small area is quite low as the allotments, whilst overgrown, are not botanically diverse. ***Further invertebrate surveys are not recommended.***

Mammals: The site was devoid of any signs of larger mammals. There is limited access to the site area due to the character of the Golf Course to the south and south-east and the residential housing to the north, and west. No evidence of any significant burrows, trials, tracks or other field signs of larger mammals was seen during the surveys carried out on the site, however, one fox was spotted passing through the eastern end of the allotments. ***A further survey for badger is not recommended as there is no evidence of a sett being present on the site or within 30m.***

3. Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

A Biodiversity Impact Assessment report and calculation was previously prepared for the site (report reference P2129 / 0721 /03 dated 22 July 2021). The proposed development utilises land the majority of the land to provide a new access from Lutterworth Road and residential housing. The new development incorporates significant tree planting and landscaped areas around the margins of the new housing and a SWALE is to be created within the north-western corner of the site area.

It was calculated that the development plan as assessed in July 2021 resulted in **a net loss in calculated biodiversity units across this site area of 1.45 units**. The report concluded that *“this decrease will have to be mitigated either by adjustment of the development or by payment of compensation for habitat creation elsewhere”*. Further details of the assessment carried out and a copy of the development plan assessed are provided in **Appendix. 2**

Unless there has been a change to the development plan the assessment completed will still be current and should be accurate.

4. BS5837:2012 Arboricultural Survey

The original survey report which is now just out of date has been reviewed and the trees within the survey area have been re-inspected to determine if there have been any significant changes to these to require revision or amendment of the original plans and tree schedules.

Within the July 2021 survey report a total of forty-three individual trees and five tree groups were identified and assessed. The inspection completed in April 2023 covered all of these individual trees to determine if any significant changes have taken place.

5. Site Inspection April 2023

The area was inspected by visual walkover on 18 April 2023. The inspection of 2023 confirmed that the habitat descriptions within the PEA 2021 report are still accurate. The golf course remains unchanged and is managed in the same way. The allotment areas are beginning to become recolonised by bramble and ruderal growth following clearance in 2022. The hedgerows are still in place and the mature and semi-mature trees are also still present.

The inspection did not identify any new evidence of protected species being present within the survey area. No evidence of badger was found but the potential for nesting birds and occasional reptiles to be present remains. The use of the area by foraging bats is still highly likely.

The inspection completed in April 2023 has also confirmed that all of the trees originally identified and surveyed within this site are present and there have been no significant changes to these identified. A copy of the original Tree Category Plan from the July 2021 report is attached as Appendix 3.

Photographs of the survey area taken in April 2023 are provided below.

Lutterworth Road and Footpath



Trees along Lutterworth Road



Footpath between golf course and allotments



Hedgerow along footpath

Golf Course Area



Golf course



Golf course



Golf course



Golf course



Scrub woodland west end of golf course



Scrub woodland west end of golf course

Former Allotments becoming overgrown





Part 3: Appraisal

5. Conclusions

It is concluded, following the review of PEA 2021 prepared by CBE Consulting and the inspection of the site area carried out in April 2023, that the PEA 2021 still accurately characterise the habitats within the site area and the descriptions within this report are still valid. The methodology used within the 2021 survey is still current and the conclusions drawn in terms of habitat classifications are still accurate.

In terms of protected species there are no significant changes identified since the 2021 survey was completed but the following things should be taken into consideration

- a) The potential for nesting birds to be present increases as the vegetation continues to recolonise. Clearance of this land outside of the bird nesting season would be prudent unless it is inspected shortly before works commence by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.
- b) The potential for small numbers of reptiles such as Common Lizard to be present across this area remains and it is possible that numbers may increase if the vegetation is allowed to grow unchecked. Measures to protect reptiles during any future vegetation clearance will be required.

The recommendations copies from the PEA 2021 remain valid:

- Measures to avoid disturbance to any nests or nesting activity will need to be considered within any development. Works to clear vegetation should either take place outside of the bird nesting season (i.e. not between 01 March and 31 August) or be preceded by a search for nests carried out by an ecologist.
- Measures to protect individual reptiles should be taken during vegetation clearance. This should consist of a search by an ecologist ahead of ground clearance equipment and directional working methods to allow reptiles to safely move away from the working area.
- Any semi-mature or mature trees to be removed should be checked by an ecologist to confirm there is no potential for roosting bats to be present.

The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment completed in July 2021 is based on the PEA 2021 and the development plan prepared at that time. As the character of the site and habitat present has not materially changed and the development plan similarly remains unchanged, it is concluded that the BNG calculation previously prepared should remain accurate.

The Enhancement and Management Scheme recommended for this site will not be onerous and will comprise the following:

- a) Details of native planting within the landscape scheme and the subsequent management of this
- b) Provision of bat and bird boxes within suitable locations. Permanent fixtures such as bat bricks and composite nest boxes will be required.
- c) Provision of reptile refugia and measures to enable hedgehogs to move across the developed site within gardens and landscaped areas.

The review of the BS5837:2012 Arboricultural Survey report confirms that there have been no significant changes to the trees within the survey area that will require this report to be revised of any changes to the recommendations provided within the July 2021 report

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Appendix 1 - 2021 Habitat Plan



Appendix 2 – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (2021)

The site area within the red line measures 2.05 hectares. The proposed development utilises land the majority of the land to provide a new access from Lutterworth Road and residential housing. The new development incorporates significant tree planting and landscaped areas around the margins of the new housing and a SWALE is to be created within the north-western corner of the site area. The area measurements below provided by the Planning Consultant have been used to help assess the habitats to be created after development of the land.

1. Total site area = 2.05 hectares
2. Total site area under houses, road and driveway after development) = 0.97ha
3. Total Site Area laid to residential gardens and landscaping (built env) = 0.52ha
4. Other (parkland, tree and scrub, grassland, attenuation etc) = 0.56ha

'Other landscaping 0.56ha identified by the Architect is subdivided into the following habitat areas within the proposed development plan:

- a) Swale area – seasonal inundation assumed to be seeded with a wetland grass mix containing a range of wildflower species suitable for wet areas = 0.10 hectares
- b) Semi-improved neutral grassland – boundary areas and land surrounding the swale made into a natural play area = 0.15 hectares
- c) Broadleaved Parkland – scattered tree areas to the east of the swale with some significant semi-mature trees present being retained = 0.17 hectares
- d) Scattered Trees – scattered trees around the margins of the development particularly along the south and east boundaries = 0.14 hectares.

The majority of the land identified as 'natural play' is not assumed to be amenity grassland as the majority of this area can be seeded with a more diverse sward than is normally associated with amenity grassland. The existing trees within the woodland / parkland area to the east of the swale will remain undisturbed and further tree planting is proposed along the southern and eastern margins margin of the development area and along the entrance road adjacent to the swale area.

The swale area is presumed to be an area that receives surface water from the development area. Rather than hold a permanent pond area it is assumed this will be an area of short-term seasonal inundation and will be landscaped using a grassland sward suitable for wetland areas that can thrive in such conditions and contain a range of suitable wildflower species.

2.3 Biodiversity Impact Calculation

The assumptions made within the biodiversity impact calculation are stated above based on the proposed layout and areas shown within the development plan.

The development plan as it is with the assumptions made above results in **a net loss in calculated biodiversity units across this site area of 1.45 units**. This decrease will have to be mitigated either by adjustment of the development or by payment of compensation for habitat creation elsewhere.

The development will increase the linear meterage of hedgerow at the site by establishing a new hedgerow with trees along the southern boundary of the development area facing the golf course.

Key:

-  Total site area = 2.05ha/ 20,500m²
-  Total area under houses, garages, driveways and roads = 0.97ha/ 9,700m²
-  Total area under residential gardens and formal amenity landscape = 0.52ha/ 5,200m²
-  Area of informal landscape and habitat creation = 0.56ha/ 5,600m²



Appendix 3 Tree Category plan from July 2021 Tree Survey report

