

0005 North Wingfield

Land Availability Assessment Review: Ecology

16.03.26

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Bennu Environmental Ltd is instructed by LANDRA Developments to undertake ecological surveys and assessments for the Land at North Wingfield (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). Following the receipt of the Land Availability Assessment (LAA) provided by North East Derbyshire (NED) Council, dated 6 March 2026, Bennu Environmental Ltd was further instructed to review the findings of the LAA.

2. Summary of the Ecological Advice within the LAA

- 2.1. The ecological advice within the LAA is summarised below in relation to designated sites, habitats and protected / notable species:
- i. **Designated Sites:** The Site is not subject to any designations and is not a core site listed within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). However, the Site is in close proximity to Wolfie Ponds Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and the Five Pits Trail, a potential LWS.
 - ii. **Habitats.** The Site is considered to consist of Arable Land, modified grassland, other neutral grassland, hedgerows and trees. Of these, the species-rich native hedgerow present onsite are considered to be Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI). However, based on the habitats present the Site is considered to be of **low ecological value**;
 - iii. **Protected / Notable Species.** The boundary features are noted to provide foraging and commuting value to bats and common reptiles. Furthermore, the Site contains suitable habitat for Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* and ground nesting birds such as Skylark *Alauda arvensis* as well as spring passage birds such as Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.

- 2.2. Whilst the ecological advice within the LAA states that the habitats present are of low value the potential development impact on biodiversity is considered to be **Moderate**. This is based on the potential displacement impacts to ground nesting and spring passage birds that are considered a moderate impact. Other potential indirect impacts are highlighted with regard to the nearby designated sites.
- 2.3. In light of the potential impacts the advice considers that any such impacts arising from the development of the Site can be address through appropriate mitigation and compensation. This could include the creation of buffers and off-site measures for ground nesting birds.

3. Review of the Ecological Advice

- 3.1. The ecology advice within the LAA has been considered further below with respect to the potential ecological receptors highlighted (i.e. designated sites, habitats and protected / notable species. Consideration is also given to the potential impacts and mitigation measures highlighted in relation to the proposed development of the Site.
- 3.2. Furthermore, it should be noted that a range of species-specific surveys have been undertaken covering the 2025 season with further surveys to be undertaken in 2026. Surveys have been undertaken for Bats, Badger, Reptiles, GCN and Dormouse. On this basis, any further proposals will be supported by a robust and well-informed ecological baseline.

Designated Sites

- 3.3. The proximity to Wolfie Ponds LWS and Five Pits Trail potential LWS is highlighted within the advice with potential indirect impacts highlighted. Such impacts are considered to be limited to localised construction related impacts and recreational impacts from new residents accessing these sites. However, it is noted that these sites are both well established for recreational use with established footpaths, interpretation boards, dog waste bins and other related infrastructure. Indeed, Wolfie Ponds LWS is a well-used and active angling site and Five Pits Trail potential LWS is a surfaced walkway. Whilst is can be expected that increased foot traffic from walkers / cyclists / dog-walkers would increase, it is considered that these sites have ample capacity to receive additional visits from a proposed development at the Site without the designated features being significantly adversely affected.

- 3.4. Notwithstanding the above, the LAA states that impacts could be mitigated through appropriate buffering of the Site along site boundaries. Furthermore, the retention and enhancement of boundary hedgerows and trees and the provision of onsite green open space to be used for informal recreational purposes that enhances this local resource and potentially takes pressure off the existing sites.
- 3.5. In addition, sensitive construction practices can be secured to minimise disturbance on adjacent habitats.

Habitats

- 3.6. As the LAA states, the habitats on site are of low ecological value, with most of the Site consisting of arable land. Whilst species-rich native hedgerows are present around the boundaries, these can targeted for enhancement through additional planting and improved management, and the Site design should seek to retain existing hedgerows wherever possible. All trees are confined to the boundaries and can be treated similarly through retention and enhancement measures. A very small area of modified grassland is present with the Site and the LAA also flagged the presence of Other Neutral Grassland. None of these habitats are considered to be of particularly high ecological value and can be easily mitigated through habitat enhancement and / or creation.

Protected and Notable Species

- 3.7. Species-specific surveys have been undertaken from 2025 and are due to continue on 2026. Results are summarised below as well as considerations of potential impacts and opportunities for enhancements.

Bats

- 3.8. In regard to bats, activity surveys carried out between June and September 2025 recorded predominantly common and widespread species. Early spring surveys are also programmed for 2026 to complete the dataset.
- 3.9. As outlined, boundary features formed of hedgerow and trees should be retained where possible to retain commuting corridors. Any proposals can include the implementation of a sensitive lighting strategy to avoid light spill onto hedgerow and

trees. The arable land is considered to offer negligible value to bats and proposals provide the opportunity to deliver new native hedgerows and trees that can enhance site wide connectivity and deliver new foraging areas. New roost features can be incorporated into the Site, by way of bat roost boxes being installed on retained trees / buildings.

Common Reptiles

- 3.10. Reptile surveys have been undertaken onsite in 2025, with a peak count of 2 individual Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica*, indicating a low population.
- 3.11. Given the Site is generally low-value arable land, potential impacts are considered avoidable through the implementation of appropriate precautionary measures during any vegetation clearance. The proposals provide an opportunity to deliver new habitats of enhanced value to reptiles such as the provision of reptile hibernacula and the creation of higher value habitats, including areas of meadow / rough grassland and scrub.

Birds

- 3.12. In terms of birds, the Site is flagged as having potential for ground nesting and spring passage birds. No specific bird surveys have been undertaken onsite to date. However, to fully inform on this element, it is advisable that bird surveys covering the breeding season and spring months are undertaken to establish a baseline understanding of bird activity onsite.
- 3.13. This would help to inform the need for any specific mitigation measures, although, as the advice note states, where impacts cannot be fully avoided on site, off-site mitigation measures could be implemented to compensate for any potential loss of nesting habitat.

4. Summary

- 4.1. Overall, the Site is predominantly of low ecological value, with moderate potential impacts flagged in the LAA arising from the displacement of ground-nesting bird (should they be found to be utilising the Site) and potential indirect effects on adjacent Local Wildlife Sites.

- 4.2. With the implementation of mitigation including retention and enhancement of boundary features, precautionary measures for reptiles, creation of buffers and off-site measures, where necessary, it is considered that no major concerns related ecology exist onsite.