



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Drabble House Farm, Silsden

Report reference: R-2709-01

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The information which we have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions. This report does not constitute legal advice.



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Summary

Purpose of report

This report is produced to present an initial assessment of the potential ecological constraints and opportunities relating to a Site known as Drabble House Farm; to inform the Site's potential for development.

The report has been prepared to advise the client of potential ecological constraints and opportunities, in preparing an application for planning permission.

This survey and report will require the support of further surveys / reports before submission to planning.

Methodology

The report is based on a Desk Study of designated wildlife sites and records of protected or notable species, and an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey carried out in September 2016.

Findings Key-Points

The majority of the Site supports habitats of low ecological value, the presence of which will not pose any major constraint to development.

The mature trees hold greater ecological value and these should be retained and protected wherever possible.

The small barn has been highlighted as having moderate bat roost suitability, alongside four of the trees. Further surveys are recommended to assess the status of roosting bats and general bat activity across the Site.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Drabble House Farm, Hawber Lane, Silsden, West Yorkshire, Address, Grid Ref SE 047 464.
2. This report is produced with reference to British Standard BS42020 'Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development' and the CIEEM (2013) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Scope

3. The application site 'the Site' comprises grazing fields, with occasional mature trees and a single small barn in the northeast of the Site. It is defined in figure 1 below.
4. The assessment uses a 2km area of search around the Site for records of protected and notable species and locally or nationally designated wildlife sites.

Figure 1 The Site



Proposals

5. At present, specific proposals for the Site are not yet available, but will involve the construction of a primary school.

Site context

6. The Site is located on the outskirts of Silsden, a small town between Skipton and Keighley. The Site is surrounded in most parts by further grazing fields, with residential properties along the north-western boundary.
7. Beyond the immediate Site boundary lies residential development associated with Silsden to the west, and open farmland in all other directions, alongside small areas of woodland.

Water bodies

8. No waterbodies are found on mapping within a 500m radius of the Site.

Wildlife corridors

9. There are limited wildlife corridors in close proximity to the Site, the most significant being The Beck, located c.370m to the west, and the Leeds- Liverpool Canal found c.530m to the south.
10. Whilst the surrounding landscape is largely open greenspace, the majority consists of unvaried fields, with high value habitat limited to hedgerow field margins, small pockets of woodland and Silsden Reservoir c.900m to the north.

Figure 2 Analysis of wildlife corridors and higher value habitat in relation to the Site. White dashed line shows wildlife corridors, whilst orange shading denotes higher value habitat



Designated Sites

Statutory Designations

11. A search has been made to identify any nationally designated sites within a 2km radius of the Site, and for internationally designated sites within a 10km radius. No designated sites under this search criteria have been found.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs)

12. The Site lies within the IRZ for South Pennine Moors SSSI, but does not fall into one of the highlighted categories which requires consultation between the Local Planning

Authority (LPA) and Natural England (NE). The development is of a scale and nature which is unlikely to impact on this SSSI.

Non-Statutory Designations

13. There are thirteen locally designated sites within 2km of the Site, this includes 2 sites of Ecological or Geological Importance (SEGI), 8 Local Wildlife Site (LWS), 8 Bradford Wildlife Area's (BWA) and 1 Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS). These are listed in the below table:

Table 1 Non-statutory designated sites

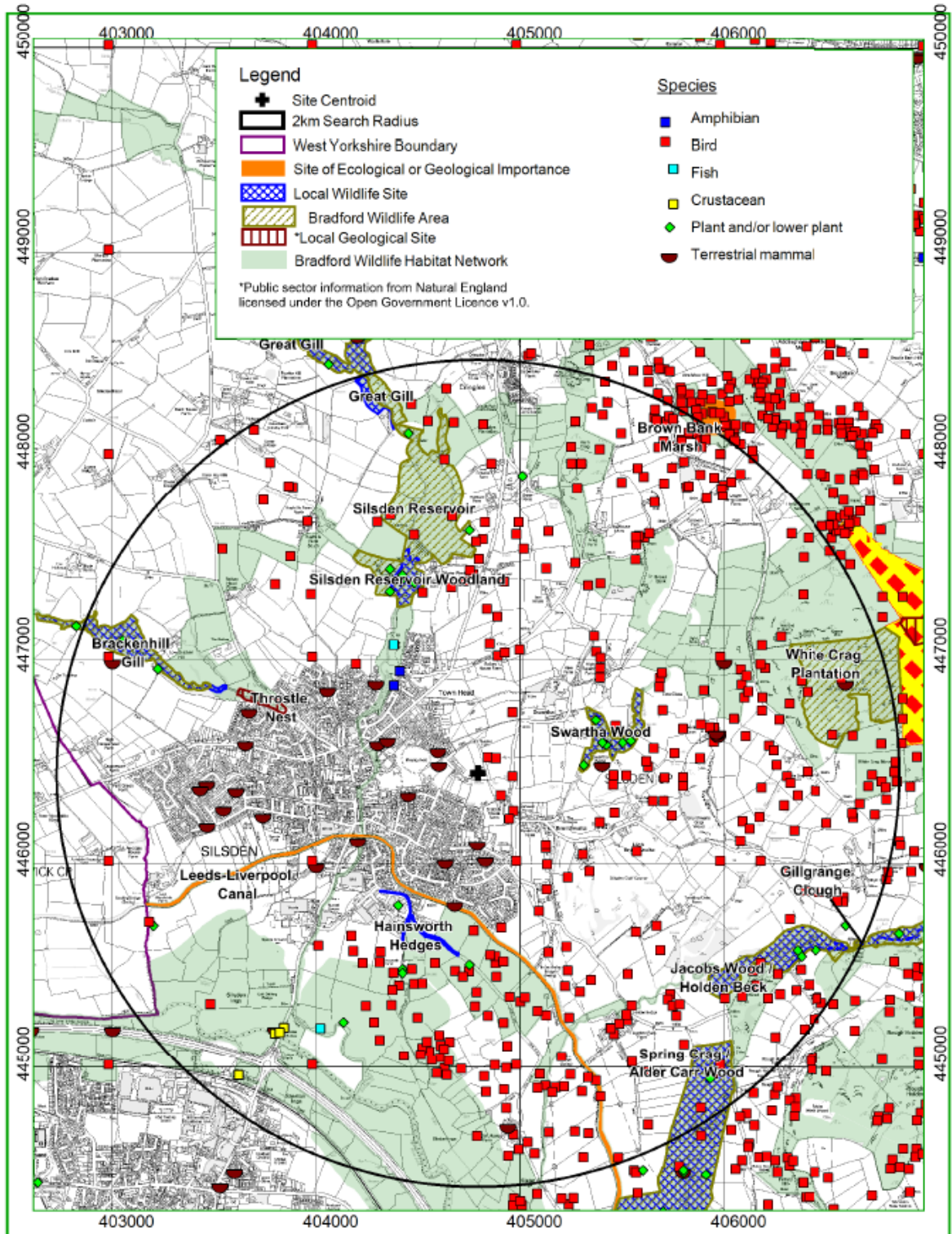
Site	Designation	Distance
Leeds- Liverpool Canal	SEGI	530m south
Swartha Wood	LWS/ BWA	530m east
Hainsworth Hedges	LWS	670m south
Silsden Reservoir Woodland	LWS	750m north
Silsden Reservoir	BWA	900m north
Throstle Nest	RIGS	900m west
Brackenhill Gill	LWS/ BWA	1km west
Jacob's Wood/ Holden Beck	LWS/ BWA	1.5km southeast
Spring Crag/ Alder Carr Wood	LWS/ BWA	1.6km southeast
White Crag Plantation	BWA	1.7km east
Great Gill	LWS/ BWA	1.7km north
Brown Bank Marsh	SEGI	2km northeast
Gillgrange Clough	LWS/ BWA	2km southeast

14. The Site is sufficiently separated from all above designations for negative impacts to be considered very unlikely.

Bradford Wildlife Habitat Network

15. The nearest part of the Bradford Wildlife Habitat Network (BWHN) lies c.430m west of the Site. This relates to the Beck, and is separated from Site by residential development. The Site has no interaction with the BWHN.

Figure 3 Locally designated sites provided by West Yorkshire Ecology



Habitats

Method

16. The survey was carried out during September 2016¹ and followed Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010).

Limitations

17. Sufficient time was afforded the surveyor to carry out the survey. The survey was not constrained by poor weather.



Figure 4

General view of the Site

Results

18. The following habitats were identified within the Site and on its immediate boundaries:
 - Neutral improved/semi- improved grassland
 - Mature trees
 - Hedgerows
 - Building

¹ This Report has been prepared during December 2016 following a visit to the site in September 2016 and our findings are based on the conditions of the site that were reasonably visible and accessible at that date. We accept no liability for any areas that were not reasonably visible or accessible, nor for any subsequent alteration, variation or deviation from the site conditions which affect the conclusions set out in this report.

Neutral improved/semi-improved grassland

19. The majority of the Site falls into the category of improved grassland, being fields grazed by a mix of sheep and cattle. As such, the sward is relatively short and has been well fertilised. The resulting grassland is dominated by perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), alongside less abundant Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), and meadow grasses (*Poa* spp.). Forbs are frequent throughout though of low diversity comprising of white and red clover (*Trifolium repens* and *T. pratense*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* spp.) and cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*).
20. Within the north-eastern section of the grassland, the sward composition varies slightly, with finer grass species present, here fertilisation has been less and the sward could be described as semi-improved. Additional species include creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and common bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and (*A. capillaris*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), alongside common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*) and the common moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*. Even this grassland contains none of the grass or forb indicators of more valuable grasslands such as lowland meadow.



Figure 5

Semi-improved grassland

Mature Trees

21. Occasional mature trees are found across the Site, being either ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) or oak (*Quercus* spp.). These are found along the boundaries of the Site and the central field margin.



Figure 6

Mature trees along the central field margin

Hedgerow

22. A small length of hedgerow is found along part of the northern boundary. This is an unmanaged and gappy example being roughly 3m in height, with the dominant species hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).



Figure 7

Trees and small section of hedgerow on the northern boundary – looking west.

Building

23. One building is found within the Site, this being a small barn currently used for storage. The barn is described in greater detail in the Bat Roost Suitability Assessment section below.



Figure 8

Barn in the north-eastern corner of the Site

Fauna

Bats

24. Twenty- eight records have been returned for within a 2km radius of the Site. Of these, thirteen relate to roosts and four to possible roosts of common pipistrelle, pipistrelle or indeterminate bat species. The closest roost record comes from c.90m to the west of the Site, of a large common pipistrelle roost of 139 individuals.

Bat Roost Suitability Assessment

25. The Site offers some potential for roosting bats, with features suitable found across the barn and mature trees. The Site's potential to support roosting bats is described below, and all buildings/ trees have been assessed against the criteria set out in Table 2.

Table 2 Bat Roosting Suitability of buildings and trees

Suitability	Criteria
<i>Negligible</i>	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
<i>Low</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions, and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by a larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
<i>Moderate</i>	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only - the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
<i>High</i>	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protections, conditions and surrounding habitats.

26. The barn in the north-eastern corner of the Site is single storey of original stone with a gable- gable corrugated metal roof; some of which is absent. The external walls offer many cracks and crevices which lead into the wall cavity, creating numerous features to support roosting bats. Gaps are also found at the verges, between the stonework and metal sheets.
27. The un-glazed windows and missing roof sheets provide free- flight access into the barns interior, with many gaps into the wall cavity found internally. However, the internal timber frame work is in good condition, and where these meet the wall tops, the high level of light within the buildings prejudices its use by roosting bats.
28. Overall, the building is assessed as having *moderate* suitability for roosting bats.

Figure 9 Interior of the barn



29. Four trees (three oak and one ash) were assessed as having moderate suitability to support roosting bats, and are indicated on D-2709-01.1. All other trees are assessed as having either low or negligible roost potential. Of those with moderate roost potential, general scars and rot holes were found across the oak trees providing access into the trunk cavity. The ash tree along the northern boundary was largely hollow with many small holes in the lower trunk providing various suitable features.



Figure 10

Ash along northern boundary with moderate suitability for roosting bats

Foraging / commuting

30. The trees along the northern boundary and those within the central Site present opportunities for commuting or foraging bats. However, given the size of the Site, and the small area in which these trees cover, the local bat population is unlikely to be dependent upon the Site, instead foraging in low numbers for short periods of time.

Amphibians

31. There are two records of common frog in the Study Area but not the Site. There are no records of great crested newt within the 2km radius.
32. No waterbodies suited to amphibian breeding were found on Site and none can be found on mapping within 500m.
33. The Site supports limited terrestrial habitat, given the heavy usage of the Site for grazing sheep and cattle. This, alongside the lack of waterbodies in close proximity, means the likely absence of the protected great crested newt is concluded.

Birds

34. Records have been returned for a range of common and widespread birds within the desk Study Area. No records come from within the Site.
35. The mature trees across the Site have potential to support a range of common nesting birds. In addition, evidence of nesting birds was found within the barn, including that of historic use by barn owl and precaution is therefore advised with regards to Site clearance.

Invasive Species

36. No species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were found at the Site during the survey.

Conclusions and Recommendations

37. The majority of the Site (improved/ semi-improved grassland of low diversity) can be considered to support habitats of low ecological value which do not constrain the proposed development.
38. The mature trees across the Site do provide greater ecological value and future development should look to retain and protect these trees. Any loss should be mitigated for through the planting of other large native trees such as oak or lime.
39. The barn and four of the trees are assessed as having moderate suitability for roosting bats. Two emergence surveys are necessary, with the first survey having already been carried out during Autumn 2016, and the final one programmed in for Spring 2017.
40. Negative impacts on nearby wildlife sites or the LWHN would not be expected due to their distance and lack of functional linkage.

Further Surveys and the Planning Situation

41. Additional surveys will be required in terms of confirming and supporting this preliminary assessment. These are summarised in the tables below;

Table 3 Additional survey required

Survey	Rationale	Timing
Bat activity survey	Two night time transects and two 5-day periods of remote monitoring should be carried out. The first has been carried out in September 2016, whilst the second is scheduled for Spring 2017.	Spring 2017

Survey	Rationale	Timing
Bat emergence surveys	The building and the four trees are to be subject to two emergence surveys to determine whether they support roosting bats. The first has been carried out in September 2016, whilst the second is scheduled for Spring 2017.	Spring 2017

42. Some further surveys will inform precautions taken during the Site's development, but will not impact on the layout or planning decisions. These are best carried out once timescales are known. They can be time constrained and information on those required at this Site is provided below to aid project planning.

Table 4 Additional survey required pre-commencement

Survey	Rationale	Timing
Nesting bird surveys	Precaution is recommended in relation to nesting birds. The destruction of active nests is prohibited by law. Site clearance (including any works to the barn) should be carried out outside the nesting period or be preceded by a nesting bird survey which would allow any active nests to be identified and protected.	Immediately prior to any clearance

Ecological Enhancement

43. The requirement for development to make a positive contribution to biodiversity is clearly set out guidance such as the NPPF and BS:42020 - beyond mitigating or compensating any potential impacts.
44. The following themes provide opportunities for the proposals to deliver such a contribution:
- The design of the school grounds provide the opportunity for the development to have an ecological net gain. Linear planting of native or high value species could be made around its boundaries to maximise the food resources for birds and insects. In addition, the creation of a wildlife garden which incorporates a variety of habitats such as those of woodland and meadow would be highly valuable in providing habitats for local wildlife, whilst also encouraging children to engage with our wildlife.
 - A variety of habitat boxes could also be erected across the school grounds, including those for bats (Ibstock enclosed bat box), birds (a range of open and hole fronted) and insects (NHBS insect tower). Cameras could be installed in nest boxes as an educational tool.

- Grass margins at the periphery of the Site could be planted as lowland meadow type vegetation - restoring one of the habitats likely to have been present here in the past. This would provide a resource for wildlife for education and an attractive and low maintenance backdrop to the school grounds – far preferable to regularly mown amenity grass.

Appendices

1. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Plan
2. Explanatory Notes and Resources
3. Bat Activity Survey Rationale
4. Information on legislation / protection

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Appendix 1 – Extended Phase 1 Habitat Plan



-  Improved/ semi-improved neutral grassland
-  Buildings
-  Hedgerow
-  Trees

Target notes:

-  Tree with moderate root suitability



Appendix 2 – Explanatory Notes and Resources Used

Site context

Aerial photographs published on commonly used websites were studied to place the site in its wider context and to look for ecological features that would not be evident on the ground during the walkover survey. This approach can be very useful in determining if a site is potentially a key part of a wider wildlife corridor or an important node of habitat in an otherwise ecologically poor landscape. It can also identify potentially important faunal habitat (in particular ponds) which could have a bearing on the ecology of the application site. Ponds may sometimes not be apparent on aerial photographs so we also refer to close detailed maps that identify all ponds issues and drains. We use Promap Street + scale maps for this purpose.

Designated Sites

A search of the MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) website was undertaken. The MAGIC site is a Geographical Information System that contains all statutory (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI's]) as well as many non-statutory listed habitats (e.g. ancient woodlands and grassland inventory sites). It is a valuable tool when considering the relationship of a potential development site with nearby important habitats. In addition, information from the local record holders was referred to on locally designated sites.

Functional linkage with off-Site habitats

When assessing these we consider whether the Site could be functionally linked to them, considering links such as;

- Hydrological links - is the Site upstream downstream, or could ground water issues affect it?
- Physical links - is the site in close proximity and could it be directly or indirectly affected by construction and operational effects? Conversely it may be that despite proximity major barriers separate the two.
- Recreational links - Do footpaths and roads make it likely that increased recreational pressure could be felt?
- Habitat links - Is the site part of a network of similar habitat types in the wider area? These could be joined by linear corridors or could simply be 'stepping stones of habitat of similar form or function.

Bradford Wildlife Habitat Network

The Bradford Habitat Network is referred to in Core Strategy Policy G9 – so is afforded a level of protection - but this should be in relation to being able to maintain physical linkages for wildlife.

The Bradford Wildlife Habitat Network aims to meet the requirements of paragraph 114 of the National Planning Policy Framework for Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - Local planning authorities should: "set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure".

Method

Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This involves walking the site, mapping and describing different habitats (for example: woodland, grassland, scrub). The survey method was "Extended" in that evidence of fauna and faunal habitat was also recorded (for example droppings, tracks or specialist habitat such as ponds for breeding amphibians). This modified approach to the Phase 1 survey is in

accordance with the approach recommended by the Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (IEA, 1995) and Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2012).

Faunal appraisal

This section first looks at the types of habitat found on Site or within the sphere of influence of potential development, then considers whether these could support protected, scarce or NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species (referred to collectively as 'notable species').

Records of notable species supplied from a 2km area of search by West Yorkshire Ecology(WYE) are used to inform this appraisal.

We discuss further only notable species or groups which could be a potential constraint due to the presence of suitable habitat and their presence (or potential presence) in the wider area. We screen out and do not present accounts of notable species or groups which do not meet these criteria – in some cases it may be necessary to explain this reasoning.

Evaluation

In evaluating the site the ecologist will take into account a number of factors in combination, such as:

- the baseline presented above,
- the site's position in the local landscape,
- its current management and
- its size, rarity or threats to its integrity.

There are a number of tools available to aid this consideration, including established frameworks such as Ratcliffe Criteria or concepts such as Favourable Conservation Status. Also of help is reference to Biodiversity Action Plans in the form of the Local BAP and Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) to determine if the site supports any Priority habitats or presents any opportunities in this respect.

The assessment of impacts considers the generic development proposals from which potential effects include:

- Vegetation and habitat removal
- Direct effects on significant faunal groups or protected species
- Effects on adjacent habitats or species such as disturbance, pollution and severance
- Operation effects on wildlife such as noise and light disturbance

Consideration is given to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), which for this site is the '**Bradford Biodiversity Action Plan**'.

Species/group	Habitat
Freshwater White-clawed Crayfish	In Bye Grassland
Green Hairstreak	River corridors
Blue butterflies	Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows
Lapwing	Upland oak woodland
Lesser Twayblade	
Twite	
Marsh Fern	
White Letter Hairstreak	
Yellowhammer	

Water Vole
Brown Hare
Otter
Pipistrelle
Grayling

Appendix 3 – Bat Activity Survey Rationale

The Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (BCTG) (Collins 2016) is now widely accepted as providing a basis and rationale for scoping and conducting bat surveys. It is acknowledged that the guidelines provide a wealth of background and are a very useful tool in standardising approaches to survey, it is also felt that an over reliance on some of the guidelines within this document can result in the provision of complicated surveys where they have significant consequences for the cost, or timescale of a large project, but could never deliver positives for bat conservation.

Taking the BCTG document as a whole, Chapter 2 helps the reader understand whether or not surveys are required, and that in the context of planning and development survey is required in relation to ensure;

- the avoidance of legal offences, and;
- the provision of a sufficient level of information - such that will allow the Local Planning Authority to make an informed decision on the proposals and their potential impacts on the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of bats.

Attendance at seminars presented by, and discussions with, those involved in production of the BCTG document has emphasised the point that it is within the remit of the consultant ecologist to make a decision on the necessity and scope of surveys - they will use the guidelines in doing so but are not in any way bound by them: this is reflected in Section 1.1 of the guidelines -

'The Guidelines do not aim to either override or replace knowledge and experience. It is accepted that departures from the guidelines (e.g. either decreasing or increasing the number of surveys carried out or using alternative methods) are often appropriate. However, in this scenario an ecologist should provide documentary evidence of (a) their expertise in making this judgement and (b) the ecological rationale behind the judgement.'

Such decisions require a consideration of the potential of the project to impact on bat habitat, alongside analysis of the value of habitat on and around the site and of local records and the likelihood that bats might occur in significant numbers. Our reports aim to present information on how we have arrived at our decision on the site, what assumptions we have based this on, and where further survey is recommended we indicate what the objective of this survey should be and how best this would be achieved.

The majority of the Site is of low value to bats given the closely grazed improved grassland. However, the occasional mature trees, especially those along the northern boundary which link to further offsite trees mean it would be useful to understand bat activity along these features and compare these to the Site as a whole. Autumn and spring transects and remote monitoring of key features will be carried out with survey results determining the level of precaution / mitigation applied to these features in any detailed designs.

Objectives of these surveys should be:

- confirm levels of use and the assemblage of bats present on the site generally
- confirm patterns of activity and identify key features
- identify levels of use of the affected foraging or commuting features to be and inform levels of mitigation require (if any).

Appendix 4 Wildlife Legislation, Policy and Guidance

This is not an exhaustive list but sets out briefly the relevance of Legislation, Policy and Guidance in terms of planning applications and this assessment.

Legislation

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive).

Provides framework at an international (EU) level for the consideration / protection of European Protected Species (EPS), and habitats through the designation of sites.

Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of wild birds (EC Birds Directive) and The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971)

Provides framework at an international (EU) level for the consideration / protection of important bird populations and the sites on which they are dependant.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010)

This transposes 1 into UK law and provides the basis on which all EPS are protected and impacts on them can be licensed in the UK.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended

This provides the basis on which UK species are legally protected or restricted and confers protection on Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSIs. It contains annexes of plants and animals which are legally protected as well as those which are considered to be invasive or harmful. It provides the basis on which impacts on such species can be licensed in the UK and provides controls on work on or near SSSIs.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

Provides a statutory basis for nature conservation, strengthens the protection of SSSIs and UK protected species and requires the consideration of habitats and species listed on the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (UKBAP / LBAP).

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)

Sets out the responsibilities of Local Authorities in conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the Act requires the publishing of lists of habitats and species which are "of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity". At present these largely reflect those making up the UKBAP lists.

Hedgerows Regulations (1997)

Define and provide protection for Important Hedgerows.

Protection of Badgers Act (1992)

Protects badgers from persecution, this includes excavation / development in the proximity of setts.

Protected Sites

Statutory EU / International Protected Sites

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites contain examples of some of the most important natural ecosystems in Europe. Work on or near these sites is strictly protected and Local Authorities will be expected to carry out 'Appropriate Assessment' of development in proximity of them. In this case there is often an increased burden on the developer in relation to provision of information and assessment.

Statutory UK Protected Sites

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); National Nature Reserves (NNRs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) all receive strict protection under UK legislation. Work in or in proximity to these sites would be restricted with any needing to be agreed with Natural England. Natural England now provide guidance on the nature of development which could impact on SSSIs through Impact Risk Zones.

Locally Protected Sites

Local Authorities have a variety of protected wildlife sites designated at a local or regional level. These are gradually being brought under the banner of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) but at present a plethora of different designations exist - all subject to local policy.

Protected Species

European Protected Species

A number of species (most relevantly bats, great crested newts [GCN], and otters) receive strict protection from killing, injury and disturbance under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Protection is also conferred on the habitats on which they rely such as roost space in the case of bats and ponds and fields etc. in the case of GCN.

UK Protected Species

A number of species (including bats, GCN, water vole and white clawed crayfish) are strictly protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, from killing, injury, disturbance and damage or destruction of their resting places etc. Certain species (such as reptiles) and some birds (such as barn owl) receive partial protection e.g. at certain times of the year or from certain activities only. All nesting bird species are protected from damage or destruction of their nests - whilst active.

Invasive species

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, lists these species and makes it an offence to cause or allow their spread in the wild. This often has impacts on development and planning in relation to the presence of invasive plant species such as: himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Planning Policy / Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework was published in 27 March 2012 replacing the majority of previous Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The most relevant paragraphs from the NPPF are set out below.

The general approach to assessing the natural environment is now embedded within the definition of what 'sustainable development' is. Paragraph 7 (P7) of the NPPF states that sustainable development should "contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment" and "help to improve biodiversity". There is also a need for positive inclusion of the natural environment in development design and "moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature" (P9). P14 sets out the Frameworks presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The natural environment is stated within the NPPF core principles: development should "*recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*" and contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should, "*prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework*" (P17).

Section 11 of the NPPF details the approach to the natural environment. The Framework states that development should "*minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity, where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*" (P109).

The Framework sets out ways to minimise the impacts on biodiversity through "*promoting the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets*" (P117).

The NPPF requires the consideration of the impacts of development on the natural environment. The Framework also encourages "*opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments*" (P118). Importantly this paragraph (P118) sets out the hierarchy of avoiding, mitigating and compensating harm from development - plans should ensure that they can demonstrate engagement with this hierarchy when required.

Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services.

This strategy builds on the Natural Environment White Paper (June 2011) - The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature. Setting out the current UK Government's approach to nature conservation. It promotes a more coherent and inclusive approach to conservation and the valuing in economic and social terms of economic resources.

The strategy promotes initiatives such as Biodiversity Offsetting, Nature Improvement Areas and a focus on well-connected natural networks and introduces the concept of securing a 'no net loss' situation with regard to UKBAP / Section 41 habitats and species.

ODPM circular 06/05 (2005) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System

Provides guidance to Local Authorities on their obligations to biodiversity – particularly in relation to assessing planning applications and ensuring the adequacy of information.

BSI (2013) British Standards Institute BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity — Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

Provides a standard for the biodiversity assessment and development industries and decision makers such as Local Planning Authorities to work to.