

Rabbit Ings Country Park Visitors Centre



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

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Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

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Author	Rachel Barnes BSc (Hons) MSc Graduate Ecologist			
Technical Review	Rob Weston BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM Associate			
QA	Carly Lucas BSc (Hons) Graduate Ecologist			
Authorised	Rob Weston BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM Associate			
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Report duration	In accordance with CIEEM (2019), unless otherwise stated the findings of this report remain valid for a period of 18 months. After this period advice should be sought on the scope of any updating work required.			
Amendments	12/02/26	RB	SAK	Updated to reflect new red line boundary.



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Unit A, 1 Station Road, Guiseley, Leeds, LS20 8BX
Phone: 01943 884451
01943 879129
www.brooks-ecological.co.uk
Registered in England Number 5351418

Contents

Introduction.....	5
Desk Study	6
Designations.....	7
Habitat Appraisal.....	9
Faunal Appraisal.....	11
Ecological Constraints & Opportunities	19
Conclusions and Recommendations	20
References.....	21
Appendix 1 Habitats and Ecological Features.....	23
Appendix 2 List of species recorded	24
Appendix 3 Explanatory Notes and Resources Used	24
Appendix 4 Bat Activity Survey Rationale.....	27
Appendix 5 Wildlife Legislation, Policy and Guidance	28

Summary

This report is produced to inform Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council of potential ecological constraints associated with their proposed development site and the need for further reporting or output to support a planning application.

This 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 July 2025 and January 2026.

Key Findings

The Site is a car park set within hardstanding and artificial unvegetated unsealed surface, with a section of introduced shrub in the centre and a ditch running approx. 2m north of the Site. Ecological constraints have not been identified at the Site.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Details on measurement of the Site's biodiversity and the implications of complying with the requirement to provide a net gain for biodiversity are provided in our separate report ER-8646-02.

Further surveys

Further surveys have not been recommended.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Rabbit Ings Country Park Visitors Centre, grid ref. SE3756911751. The survey includes land within the red line boundary shown in Figure 1, opposite.
2. This report is produced with reference to British Standard BS:42020 'Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development' and the CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Purpose of a PEA

3. A PEA is an *initial assessment* of the baseline for a proposed development site and establishes whether the Site is likely to be constrained by ecology, and whether more information is needed to identify the ecological baseline.
4. The subsequent Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Report is intended to give guidance to a developer and assist with the early stages of project planning and design. Where a site is not complex or constrained, and no additional ecological input is necessary, the PEA report *may* be sufficient and suitable to support a planning application.
5. Biodiversity Accounting metrics are used separately to quantify the value of a Site in Biodiversity Units, which helps in the later stage of assessing the ecological impacts of the proposed development. This process is set out separately in the Biodiversity Net Gain Report (8646-03A) which accompanies this PEA report.

Proposals/Reason for PEA

6. The PEA has been commissioned to inform proposals to develop the land into a classroom/activity space.

The Site

7. The application site 'the Site' is the car park at Rabbit Ings Country Park, west of Royston, which comprises a large area of hardstanding, an area of vegetation and a single storey- building. For the purposes of metric calculations, the Site area has been measured using GIS against the provided red line boundary as 0.327ha.

Figure 1 The Site (red line boundary).



Desk Study

Landscape

8. The Site is located in the visitor car park of Rabbit Ings Country Park, c. 1.5km east of the town of Royston and c. 6km northeast of Barnsley.
9. The Site is immediately bordered by grassland. The wider landscape is largely rural, with built development of Royston to the west and open farmland interspersed with woodland blocks to the east.
10. The Site overlies mudstones, siltstones and sandstones of the Pennine Middle Coal Measures. However, given its developed nature this is unlikely to significantly impact the ecological communities present.

Wildlife Corridors

11. The Site sits within a chain of semi-natural habitats formed by Rabbit Ings Country Park to the north and east, and Pools Ings woodland to the south. These are further linked by Sandybridge Dike-Pools Dike watercourse, which runs from east to south c. 425m south of the Site.
12. The disused Swinton-Normanton Railway and the Barnsley Canal, c. 200m and c. 350m west of the Site respectively, form additional wildlife corridors running north-south through the landscape (although the canal is culverted beneath Royston), providing links to woodland to the north.

Figure 2 Analysis of wildlife corridors and structured habitat visible on mapping in relation to the Site.



Designations

13. 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.

Statutory Designations

14. A search has been made to identify any nationally designated sites within a 2km radius of the Site, or internationally designated sites within a 10km radius. The results are shown in the below table.

Table 1 Statutory Designated Sites.

Site Name	Distance from Site	Designation	Summary Interest
Dearne Valley Wetlands	c. 150m S	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Lowland fen, marsh and swamp; breeding and non-breeding waterbirds and willow tit.
Carlton Marsh	c. 1.4km S*	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Wetland reserve with bird interest.

* the mapped boundary of Carlton Marsh has not been officially verified.

15. The Site is located within influencing distance of the Pool Ings and Sandybridge Dyke unit of the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. It also lies upstream of Carlton Marsh LNR. However, given the Site's size and scope of development proposals, direct and indirect impacts on either designation are considered unlikely.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs)

16. The Site lies within the 200m IRZ for the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI, but due to the Site's already developed nature, and the scope of proposals, does not fall into any of the highlighted categories which require the LPA to consult with Natural England in relation to potential impacts.
17. If the development will require an independent water supply unconnected to the mains, or the installation of new pipelines, or underground or overground cables, Natural England may need to be consulted.

Non-Statutory Designations

18. There are two Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) in the search area: Bush Wood and Ellis Laithe; and Barnsley Canal, a Local Geological Site (LGS). All are located at least 650m north of the Site, separated by Lund Hill Lane and a chemical plant, and so direct and indirect impacts are not anticipated.

Nature Improvement Area

19. The Site lies within the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area.

Wildlife Habitat Network

20. The Site is not within any mapped Wildlife Habitat Network.

Granted EPSM Licences

21. There is one granted European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence shown within 1km of the Site, c. 365m north of the Site, relating to the destruction of a great crested newt breeding site in 2009-2011.

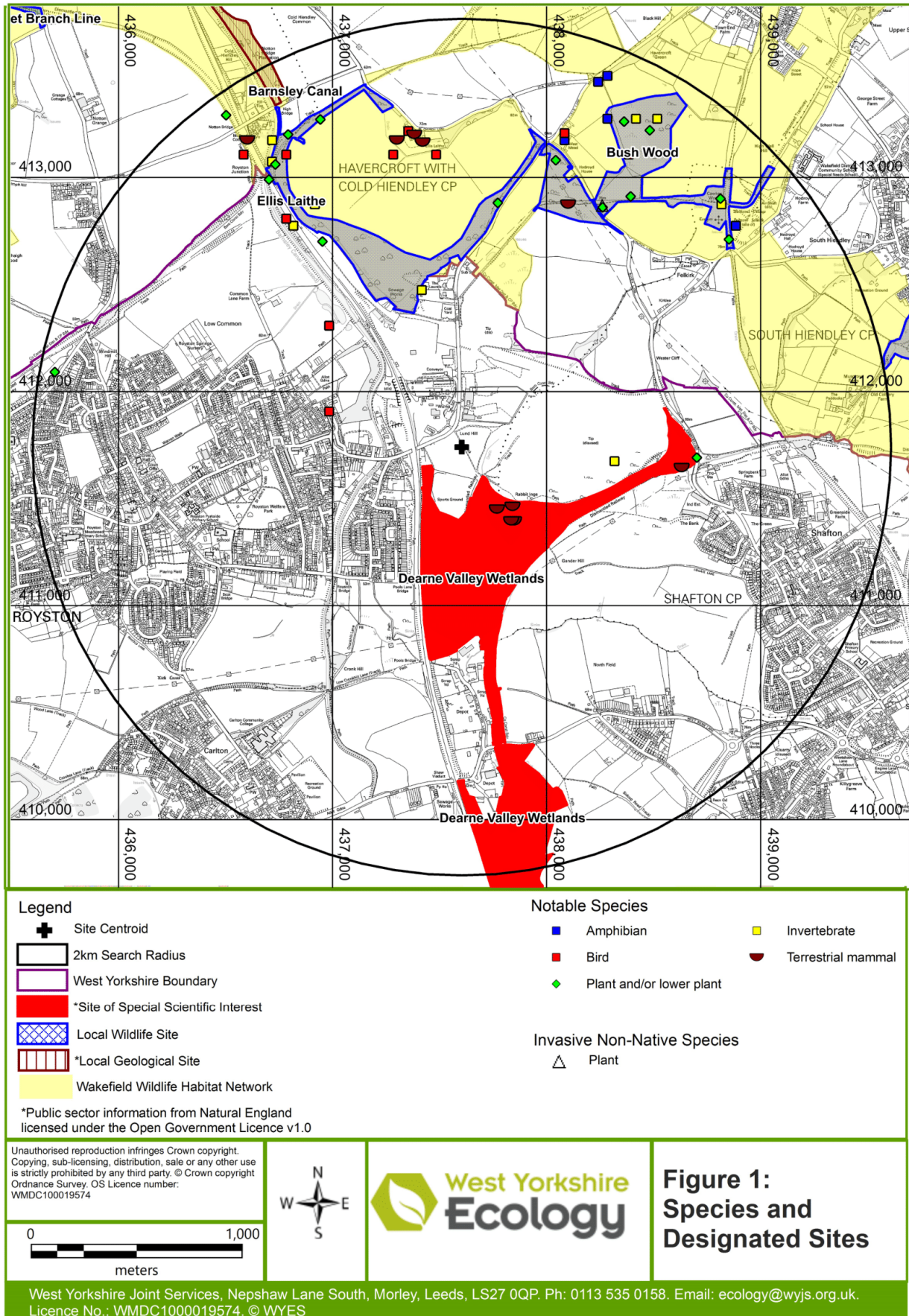
Mapped Ancient Woodland and Trees

22. There is no mapped ancient woodland (AW) or Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) within 15m of The Site.
23. Records of Ancient Trees have not been returned within the search area.

Mapped Priority Habitat

24. There is no mapped Priority Habitat within, or within influencing distance of the Site.

Figure 3 Records of designated sites and notable species within 2km of the Site; West Yorkshire Ecology.



Survey

25. The survey was carried out during July 2025¹ and followed the principles of Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010).
26. Although out of the main growing season, the nature of habitats present here, and the expertise and training of the surveyor meant that it was still possible to confidently classify the type and condition of habitats present on this Site.
27. Enough time was afforded the surveyor to carry out the survey. The survey was not constrained by poor weather.

Habitat Appraisal

28. The Site's habitats are described in order on the following pages. In line with the requirement to provide information on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), habitats are named in accordance with the UK Habitats classification system. We have used the UK Habitats v2.01 guidance in identifying habitats. Habitat descriptions are divided into the 'distinctiveness' categories used in the calculations presented in the Biodiversity Gain Assessment, with more weight being afforded the more distinctive/important habitats.
29. Generally, the following apply to each tier of distinctiveness, although some authorities might highlight some lower distinctiveness habitats as having a higher importance locally. Where relevant we have highlighted these.

Very Low Distinctiveness Habitats

30. Habitats of little or no habitat value, i.e., lacking any significant native vegetation, but could still provide supporting habitat for protected or notable fauna such as birds or bats. In the context of BNG, their areas are included in calculations, but mitigation or compensation is not required.

Low Distinctiveness Habitats

31. Habitats which are ubiquitous, often which have been created or modified intentionally. They tend to lack diversity of species and structure. They are unlikely to support notable flora but could still provide supporting habitat for protected or notable fauna. In the context of BNG, they are included in calculations, but compensation/mitigation needs only to provide habitat of similar or higher distinctiveness.

Medium Distinctiveness Habitats

32. Habitats which are common but provide a higher level of structural and species diversity. Though unlikely to support more notable assemblages, species of interest could be present here and they are more likely to be important supporting habitat to fauna. In the context of BNG, mitigation needs to provide habitat of the same broad habitat type, or that of higher distinctiveness.

High Distinctiveness Habitats

33. Habitats which are more natural and contain more important assemblages of plants and potentially species which are rare in their own right. They will provide good habitat for fauna. These habitats are likely to be targeted as conservation priorities and will be the subject of additional policy guidance or legislation. In the context of BNG, whilst mitigation or compensation for loss or damage is possible, provision of more of the same type of habitat would be required, which (with a few exceptions) is likely to be difficult.

Very High Distinctiveness Habitats

34. These are the UK's rarest/best habitats. They will be present in very particular locations and a range of rare or important plant and animal species will depend on the particular conditions they provide. These habitats will be the subject of restrictive policy guidance or legislation. Whilst the BNG metric does not preclude mitigation or compensation in respect of these habitats, creation of the same habitat type would be required, and this would range between very difficult/expensive and impossible.

Irreplaceable Habitats

35. These are habitats of high biodiversity value, which are so difficult to recreate that it would be impossible to achieve the requirement to increase biodiversity on top of no net loss. These habitats have significant protection in the NPPF; any impacts from development require a strong justification and will flag as unacceptable in the Biodiversity Metric. Bespoke compensation for any loss of these habitats must be agreed with the LPA.
36. Each habitat is mapped and an area for each type is provided in the format of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool. The areas can be used to quantify the impacts of development in an Ecological Impact Assessment if this is required by the Local Planning Authority.

¹ This Report has been prepared during January 2026 following a visit to the Site in July 2025 and January 2026, 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.

Habitats of Low/Very Low Distinctiveness

Figure 4 Approximate location and extent of these habitats.

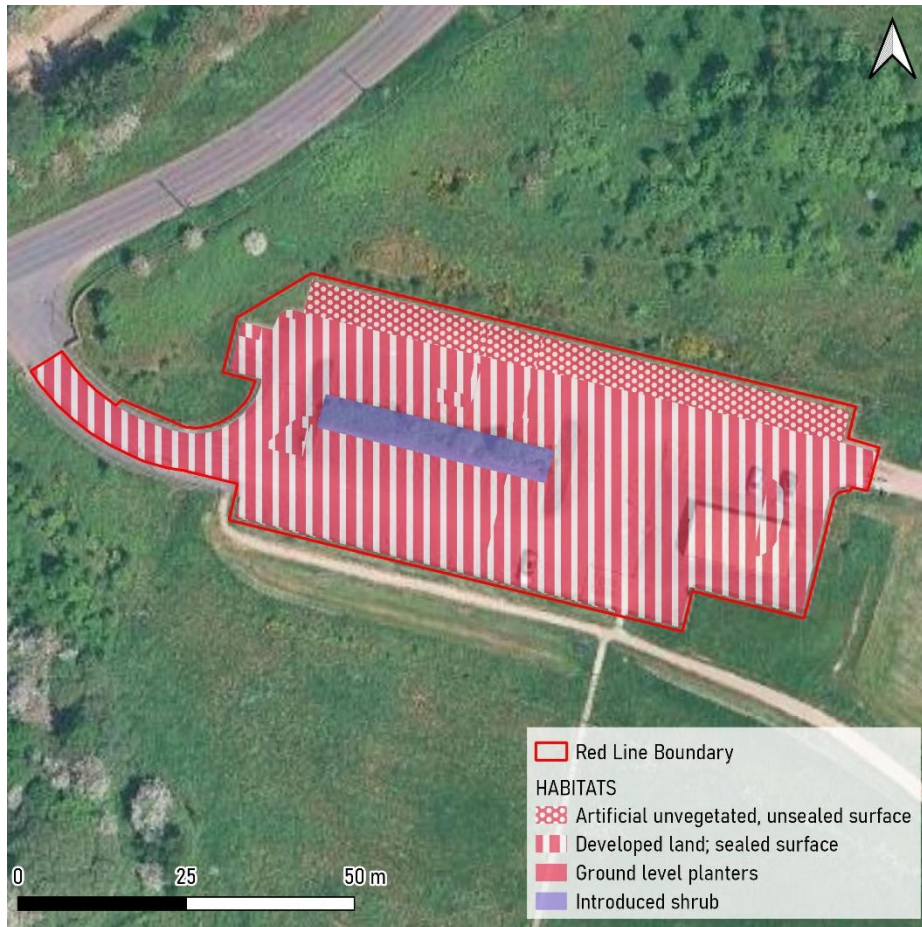


Table 2 Summary – Habitats of Low/Very Low Distinctiveness.

UK Habitats	Summary Description
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	The northern parcel of the Site is poorly colonised 'grasscrete' type parking surface mapped here as artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface. This area supports very sparse, cow parsley, creeping cinquefoil, daisy, dandelion, dock sp., fescue sp., prickly lettuce, ragwort, ribwort plantain, thistle, wall barley, yarrow, Yorkshire fog.
Developed land; sealed surface	The majority of the Site is hard standing tarmacadam surfacing.
Ground Level Planters	Two planters containing ornamental <i>Pelargonium</i> and <i>Dianthus</i> , alongside some establishing bittercress herb-Robert and nettle.
Introduced shrub	An area of introduced shrub including a mix of native and non-native species such as birch, bittercress, bramble, buddleia, cleavers, cocks foot, dogwood, false oat, firethorn, goat willow, herb robert, hogweed, honeysuckle, ivy, Lactuca, lanceolata, oak, pear willow, Plantago, red fescue, rough meadow grass, vetch and Yorkshire fog.

Habitats of Low/Very Low Distinctiveness

Figure 5 Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface.



Figure 6 Developed land; sealed surface.



Figure 7 Ground level planter to the east.



Figure 8 Ground level planted to the west.



Figure 9 General view of introduced shrub



Figure 10 General view of introduced shrub



Habitats of Medium Distinctiveness

Figure 11 Approximate location and extent of these habitats.



Table 3 Summary of Medium Distinctiveness habitats.

UK Habitats	Label Ref	Summary Description
Other neutral grassland	NA	Grass species included cocks foot, perennial rye, red fescue and Yorkshire fog. A range of forb species included bedstraw sp., bramble, cinquefoil, common knapweed, dandelion, hogweed, meadow buttercup, moss sp., oxeye daisy, pea sp., ribwort plantain, thistle, vetch and yarrow. There are more than 10 species per m ² .
Ditch	NA	Off-Site ditch located just under 2m north of the Site boundary.

Figure 12 View of other neutral grassland



Figure 13 View of the ditch



Trees

Figure 14 Approximate location and extent of these habitats.



Table 4 Summary - trees.

UK Habitats	Label Ref	Summary Description
Individual trees	T1	Goat willow
	T2,3	Birch

Figure 15 Goat willow



Figure 16 Two birch trees



Faunal Appraisal

37. The following pages discuss only the groups and species that could be reasonably expected to be found on the type of habitats present on, or adjacent to, the Site.

Amphibians

Desk evidence

38. There is one ponds visible on mapping within 250m of the Site: P1, c. 130m southeast. A second pond was found during the time of survey, P2, c. 100m east.
39. There are four records of great crested newt (GCN) within the search area, all relating to sites adjacent Hall Field Lane c. 1.5km northwest of the Site, and none more recent than 2012.
40. Records of common frog, common toad, and smooth newt are also returned.

Field Evidence

41. The Site does not provide habitat which would be used by amphibians in any stage of their life cycle. Therefore, the presence of P1 and P2 to the southeast and east are of little relevance to this application.

Summary Evaluation

42. The Site is unlikely to be important to GCN or any other amphibian species.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

43. No further surveys are considered necessary. Pre commencement checks of should be carried out before works start.

Figure 17 Ponds mapped in relation to the Site.



44. **Figure 18** View of Pond 1



Figure 19 View of Pond 2



Bats

Desk evidence

45. There are four records of bats within the search area, relating to Ellis Laithe c. 1.5km north and Hodroyd House c. 1.2km northeast, concerning common pipistrelles and a single indeterminate vesper bat.
46. There is a single record of a possible roost, of a single indeterminate vesper bat, at Ellis Laithe in 2000.

Field Evidence (Roosting)

47. There is on single-storey building on Site, this is of metal construction, with a double-pitched metal panel roof, metal doors and metal shutters covering the windows. Any gaps and crevices, which may function as potential roost features (PRFs) for bats are shallow and do not lead to any roosting area further into the building. The poor thermal properties of metal make the even less suitable for bats.
48. Trees have been inspected for roost suitability. All are not suitable for bats due to age and lack of suitable features.

Table 5 Bat Roost Suitability Assessment.

Ref	Notes	Suitability
Trees 1-3	Of limited age and lack suitable features	None

Field Evidence (foraging and commuting)

49. The Site supports very minimal vegetation, and is therefore unlikely to contribute any value to foraging or commuting bats, especially in the context of habitats within Rabbit Ings Country Park surrounding it on all sides.
50. The presence of street lamps on the Site's northern, western, and eastern boundaries is likely to further reduce the Site's value to bats, as many species avoid areas of direct nocturnal illumination.

Summary Evaluation

51. The building is assessed as providing negligible suitability for roosting bats. No further survey is recommended in support of this conclusion.
52. The Site's size and location suggest that it will not be important to this group.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

53. Further surveys are not recommended. There would be opportunities to provide new roost sites in the proposed building at the Site.

Typical view of building



Typical view of building



Eastern gable end



Metal guttering



Metal vent



Gap above window frame



Birds

Desk Evidence

54. Over 20 records of birds are returned, including several species which may make use of the Site, such as swift and wren.

Field Evidence

55. The Site supports no habitat that may be used by birds for feeding.
 56. A small number of common bird species were noted overflying the Site and in its vicinity during the survey, including blackbird, chaffinch, robin and wood pigeon. Other bird species heard during the survey including, goldfinch, greenfinch, linnet and wren.

Summary Evaluation

57. Based on its size and habitats, the Site will not be important to local bird populations.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

58. No further surveys are considered necessary to demonstrate current baseline in respect of birds.
 59. Standard precautions apply in respect of restrictions on clearing vegetation during the nesting season.

Badgers

Desk evidence

60. The Site falls outside the area of increased probability of badger activity, with the nearest badger sett record is over 1.5km from the Site.

Field Evidence

61. The Site provides no potential habitat for badgers to forage or build setts.

Summary Evaluation

62. Badger setts are unlikely to be present at the Site as affected by the proposals.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

63. No further surveys are considered necessary in respect of badgers.

Hedgehogs (NERC Act 2006/Local BAP)

Desk evidence

64. Hedgehogs are recorded within the search area.

Field Evidence

65. No evidence of hedgehogs was found on Site.

Summary Evaluation

66. The Site provides no suitable habitat for this species, and any presence is likely to be restricted to individuals crossing the Site between foraging areas. Numerous alternative routes are available which do not cross the Site.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

67. Presence assumed; no further surveys are considered necessary.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

68. INNS are species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), for which it is an offence to cause or allow it to grow in the wild.
69. No INNS were noted during survey².
70. Although no INNS have been identified in this preliminary survey, it is not always possible to conclude absence from preliminary survey alone due to factors such as season, accessibility, third-party attempts to hide evidence, or undisclosed treatment programmes. For this reason, this report should not be relied upon as definitive evidence of absence of INNS.
71. This site presents a small risk of supporting undetected INNS based on the following factors:
- Potential for recent earthworks or management which may have obscured viable material
 - Potential for tipping of material
72. Should further assurances be needed in relations to INNS, a dedicated Invasive Weed Survey should be commissioned.

² Whilst our ecologists are trained in the identification of invasive species, this report is not a dedicated invasive species survey. Detectability of invasive plant species can be affected by several factors, and conclusive determination status, or extent, is not

possible through preliminary survey alone. As the presence of invasive species can generate significant costs to development, the client may wish to instruct a dedicated invasive species survey prior to entering into contracts.

Ecological Constraints & Opportunities

Habitat Value

73. The usual approach to development is to minimise any net loss of biodiversity towards a gain in biodiversity value where this is possible on Site. Our separate letter on Biodiversity Gain sets out the Site's possible exemption from the mandatory BNG process.
74. Irrespective of the Biodiversity Gain process, development should still seek to retain what is best about the Site.
75. The plan opposite shows the Site in the context of mapped habitat distinctiveness with the aim of informing the design of any layout. It shows that there are targets of medium distinctiveness habitats which would need to be avoided by the proposals and that the Site is relatively uniform in terms of potential impact.

Faunal constraints

76. Faunal constraints have not been identified.

Opportunities

77. Ecological opportunities at the Site relate to:
- Potential to improve the Site's value with pollinator-friendly planting, either in flower beds or raised planters.
 - Installing roosting or nesting features on new buildings.

Figure 20 Constraints and opportunities.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Planning considerations		
Recommendation	Rationale	When
R1 Additional Surveys	None required	N/A
R2 Produce a layout which minimises loss of biodiversity	Engage with the Constraints and Opportunities set out above, involve your ecologist in designs at an early stage. The proposals will need to consider the NPPF hierarchy of Avoid–Mitigate–Compensate in minimising any loss of biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policy mandates a minimum 10% Net Gain in Biodiversity Units, and the LPA may request additional gains. Your layout may need to change to accommodate your findings from R1 surveys.	During the design process
R3 Design	Make sure your design team follows ecological advice to and make sure there are no design conflicts. <u>Produce a habitat retention plan at an early stage</u> which can be used to inform BNG and maximise scores. A habitat retention plan should identify areas which can be excluded from any impacts of clearance and construction. In producing a plan you should consider the need to provide (amongst other things) Site compounds, to store and move materials, to install drainage, flood storage, access and services, all with suitable easements.	During the design process
R4 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Carry out a BNG Assessment using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and accompanying Condition sheets produced by Defra. Prior to development commencing, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) will likely be requested by the LPA.	During the design process. Baseline survey to be completed during the appropriate season.

Other considerations (managing legal or financial risks)		
Issue	Rationale	When
R5 Nesting bird management	As with most sites, the standard precaution in relation to birds would apply. To prevent the proposed works impacting on nesting birds, any clearance of vegetation will need to be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season, which runs from 1st March–31st August inclusive. Any clearance required during the breeding bird season should be preceded by a nesting bird survey to ensure that the law is not contravened through the destruction of nests and that any active nests are identified and adequately protected during the construction phase of the development.	Prior to and during clearance
R6 Pre-construction ecology checks	It is always advisable to check that protected species (e.g., great crested newts) and invasive weeds have not colonised or become visible in the period between the date of this report and construction activities commencing.	Prior to site preparation or archaeological/geotechnical investigations.

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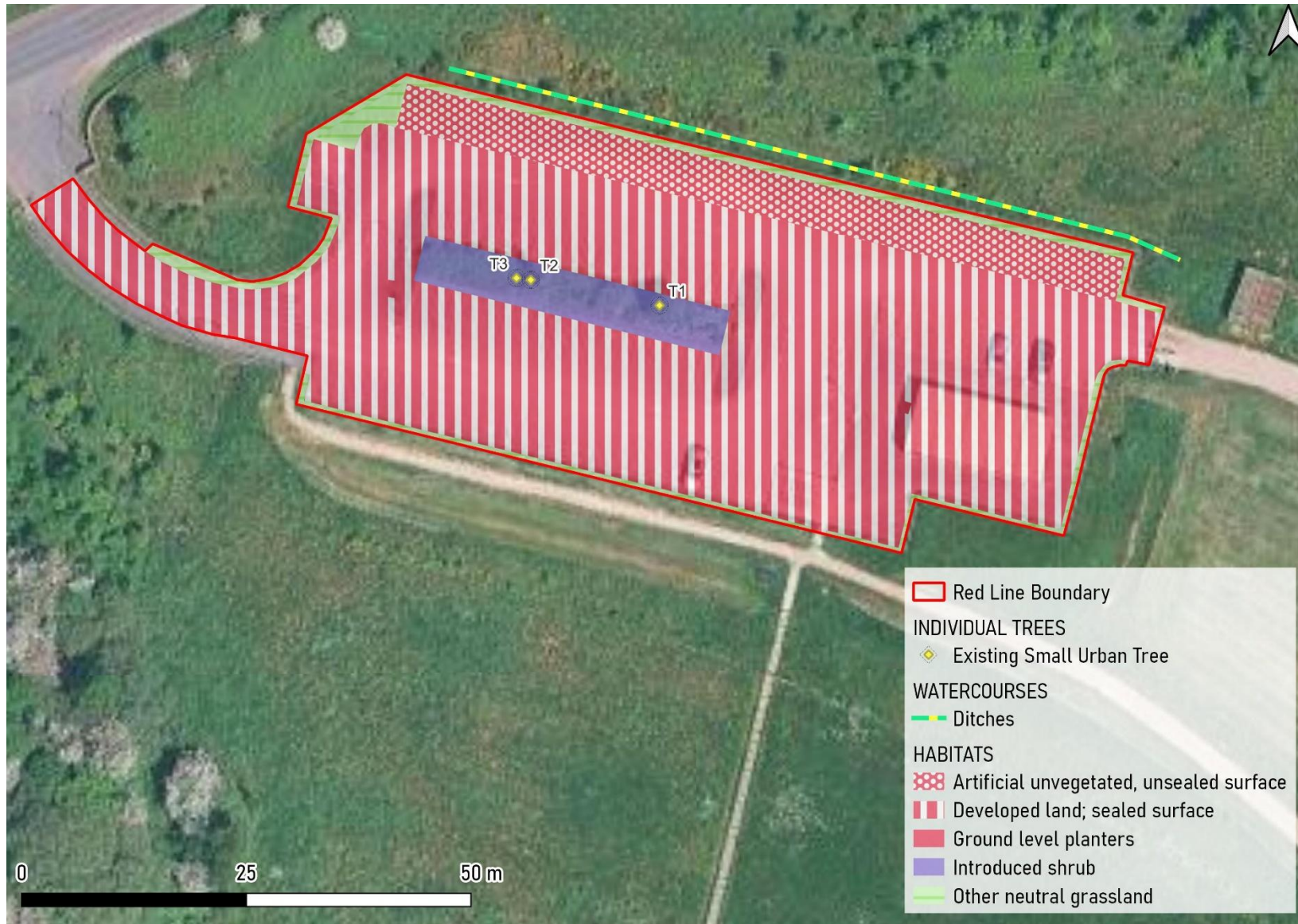
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Appendix 1 Habitats and Ecological Features



Appendix 2 List of species recorded

Yarrow	Achillea millefolium
Cow parsley	Anthriscus sylvestris
Thistle sp	Cirsium
Fescue	Festuca sp.
Yorkshire fog	Holcus lanatus
Wall barley	Hordeum murinum
Prickly lettuce	Lactuca serriola
Perennial rye-grass	Lolium perenne
Ribwort plantain	Plantago lanceolata
Creeping cinquefoil	Potentilla reptans
Dock sp	Rumex
Ragwort	Jacobaea Vulgaris
Dandelion	Taraxacum officinale agg.

Appendix 3 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.

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 [SSSIs]) 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.

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 2017).

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 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.

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

Species/Group	Habitat
Hedgehog	Mixed deciduous woodland
Bats	Upland oakwood
Water vole	Wet woodland
Otter	Parkland and wood pasture
Grey partridge	Traditional orchard
Bittern	Scrub
Kestrel	Hedgerows
Little ringed plover	Arable field margins
Lapwing	Acid grassland
Barn owl	Neutral grassland
Skylark	Amenity grassland and verges
Tree sparrow	Floodplain grazing marsh
Twite	Reedbeds
Great crested newt	Lowland fen
Salmon	Upland flushes, fens and swamps
Bullhead	Rush pastures
White-clawed crayfish	Blanket bog
Glow worm	Standing water and ponds
Dingy skipper	Running water, rivers & streams
Bluebell	Upland heathland
	Lowland heath
	Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land
	Built environment and gardens

Bats

Bat roosting potential is classified according to the following criteria set out below, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

Bat Roosting Suitability of Buildings

Suitability	Criteria
<i>None</i>	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
<i>Negligible</i>	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
<i>Low</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. 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 larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
<i>Moderate</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats 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, such as maternity and hibernation - the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
<i>High</i>	A structure 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, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

Bat Roosting Suitability of Trees

Suitability	Criteria
<i>None</i>	Either no PRFs in the tree, or highly unlikely to be any.
<i>FAR</i>	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present within the tree.
<i>PRF-I</i>	Potential roost feature suitable to support individual or low numbers of bats
<i>PRF-M</i>	Potential roost feature suitable to support multiple bats and possibly be used by a maternity colony

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

Appendix 4 Bat Activity Survey Rationale

The Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (BCTG) (Collins 2023) 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 Site is small, not strategically located, and does not contain any potential key roosting or foraging habitat features for bats. As such, its use by this group can be easily predicted, making any requirement for additional survey disproportionate.

This assessment was made by Sam Kitching BSc (Hons) MCIEEM. Sam has over 10 years of experience undertaking bat surveys in a professional capacity and is registered to use the Bat Survey Class Survey License WML CL18 (Level 2).

Appendix 5 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 the EC Habitats Directive 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 SitesStatutory 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 SpeciesEuropean 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 speciesSchedule 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 (*Reynoutria japonica*), and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Planning Policy/Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in December 2023. The most relevant paragraphs from the NPPF are set out below.

The approach to assessing the natural environment is now embedded within the definition of what 'sustainable development' is and this falls under one of three objectives of the planning system - the 'environmental objective' applying in this case. Paragraph 8c (P8c) of the NPPF states that sustainable development should "protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment", including "improving biodiversity". P10 sets out the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Section 11 of the NPPF details making effective use of land. The Framework states that planning policies and decisions should "take opportunities to achieve net environmental gains - such as developments that would enable new habitat creation" and should "recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife" (P124).

Section 15 details conserving and enhancing the natural environment; policies and decisions should be "protecting and enhancing valued landscape [and] sites of biodiversity [...] value", "recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside" and contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution (P180). Allocations of land for development should, "allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework" and "take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats" (P181).

The Framework sets out ways to minimise the impacts on biodiversity through plans which "identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity" and promote the "conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity" (P185).

It is made clear in P186 that local planning authorities should apply a set of principles when determining planning applications. Planning permission should be refused "if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided [...], adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for". Development should not normally be permitted where an adverse effect on a SSSI

is likely, and "opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity".

UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023: update to Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services

The UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023 provide updates to the indicators set out in Biodiversity 2020 including new species abundance targets as set out in the Environment Act 2021. Biodiversity 2020 builds on the Natural Environment White Paper (June 2011) - 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.