Brooks Ecological
An Origin Enterprises Company

BRT Stairfoot, Barnsley

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Report Ref. ER-8856-01

21/10/2025

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough

Report reference	**ER-8856-01 – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report**
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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.

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Summary

This report is produced to inform Barnsley Metropolitan Borough 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 October 2025.

Key Findings

The Site is a small section of woodland bordered by grassland in a public access area. It is of generally low ecological value. 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-8856-02.

Further surveys

The following precautionary measures are recommended:

- Bats: soft felling of T1
- Hedgehogs: pre-clearance checks by an ecologist and directional clearance of woodland

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at BRT Stairfoot, Barnsley, grid ref. SE 37486 05404. The survey includes land within the red line boundary shown in Figure 1, opposite, with a total area of 0.05ha.
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 Report (PEAR) 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 PEAR *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 Gain Report which accompanies this PEAR.

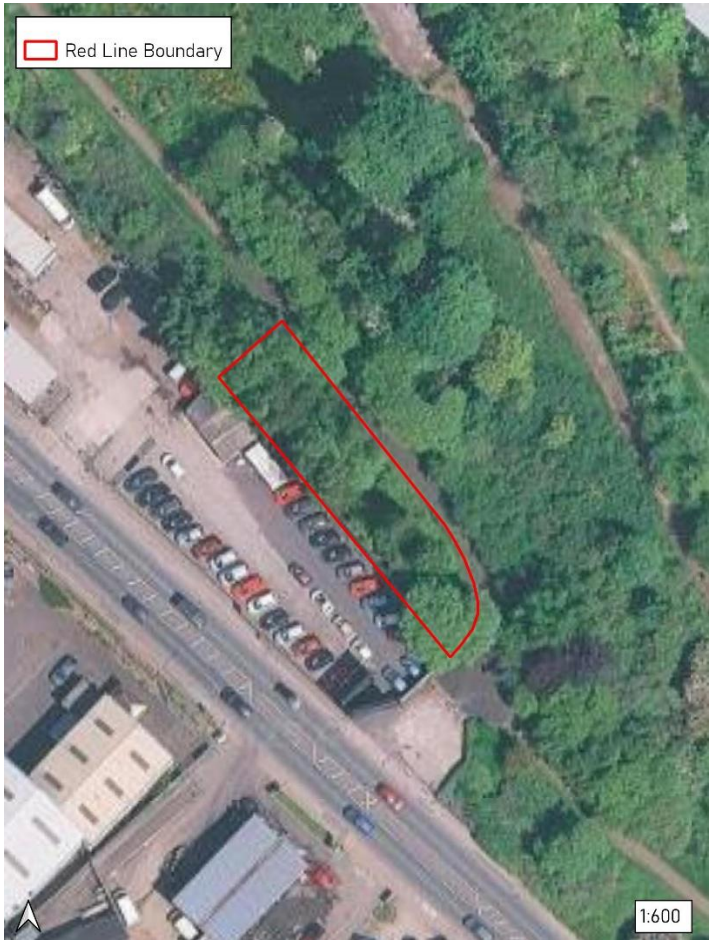
Proposals/Reason for PEA

6. The PEA has been commissioned to inform proposals to develop this small Site for commercial use.

The Site

7. The application site 'the Site' comprises a small plot of public access land just off the A633 in Barnsley. For the purposes of metric calculations, the Site area has been measured using GIS against the provided red line boundary as 0.05ha.

Figure 1 The Site (red line boundary).



Desk Study

Landscape

8. The Site is located approximately 3km southeast of Barnsley city centre. Adjacent to the Site's southwest boundary are built-up areas with car park, the A633 and industrial units. Southeast, northwest and northeast boundaries are bordered by a public access woodland with the Trans-Pennine trail bordering the Site's northeastern boundary. The wider landscape consists of a mixture of built-up residential or commercial areas and nature corridors with woodlands, grasslands and various waterbodies, as well as scattered arable field.
9. The Site overlies the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation from the carboniferous period, consisting of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, likely to give rise to sandy, well-drained soil conditions.

Wildlife Corridors

10. The Site is not linked to any formally mapped wildlife corridors, however it forms part of a network of habitats to the northeast which includes deciduous woodlands, grasslands and waterbodies which ultimately link to wider woodland corridors, but through sections of cleared or arable fields. Further woodland corridors and Barnsley nature reserve to the north and northwest also form a corridor but which are disconnected from the Site by Doncaster road and Grange Lane.

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

Designations

11. 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

12. 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
Stairfoot Brickworks	770m SE	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Geological)	Exposures of the Aegiranum Marine Band
Dearne Valley Wetlands (Unit 20)	1.6km SE	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Biological)	Unit 20: 4.3ha of Lowland mixed woodland
Dearne Valley Park	1.4km NW	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Acidic oak woodland with mosaic of wetland habitats

13. There were no internationally designated sites within a 10km radius.
14. Given the small scale of the development and distances from the nationally designated sites, direct and indirect impacts on this site as a result of this development are unlikely.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs)

15. The Site lies within the IRZ for the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI but does not fall into any of the highlighted categories which require the LPA to consult with Natural England in relation to potential impacts.

Non-Statutory Designations

16. There are four Local Wildlife Sites in the search area. These are:
    - Stairfoot Disused Railway, 320m NW/N
    - Dearne Valley Park, 1.2km NW
    - Sunny Bank Horse Carr and Storrs Wood, 1.3km NE
    - Wombwell Wood, 1.9km S
17. Direct and indirect impacts on all these sites as a result of this small development are unlikely due to the Site's distance, and in Stairfoot Disused Railway's instance, separation by an expanse of developed land including Doncaster road.

Nature Improvement Area

18. The Site is within the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area.

Wildlife Habitat Network

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

Granted EPSM Licences

20. There is one granted European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences shown within 1km of the Site, consisting of the destruction of a soprano pipistrelle breeding feature, located 730m NE of the Site. The licence is dated 2016, expired in 2021.
21. No Great Crested Newt licences or pond survey data was returned within 1km.

Mapped Ancient Woodland and Trees

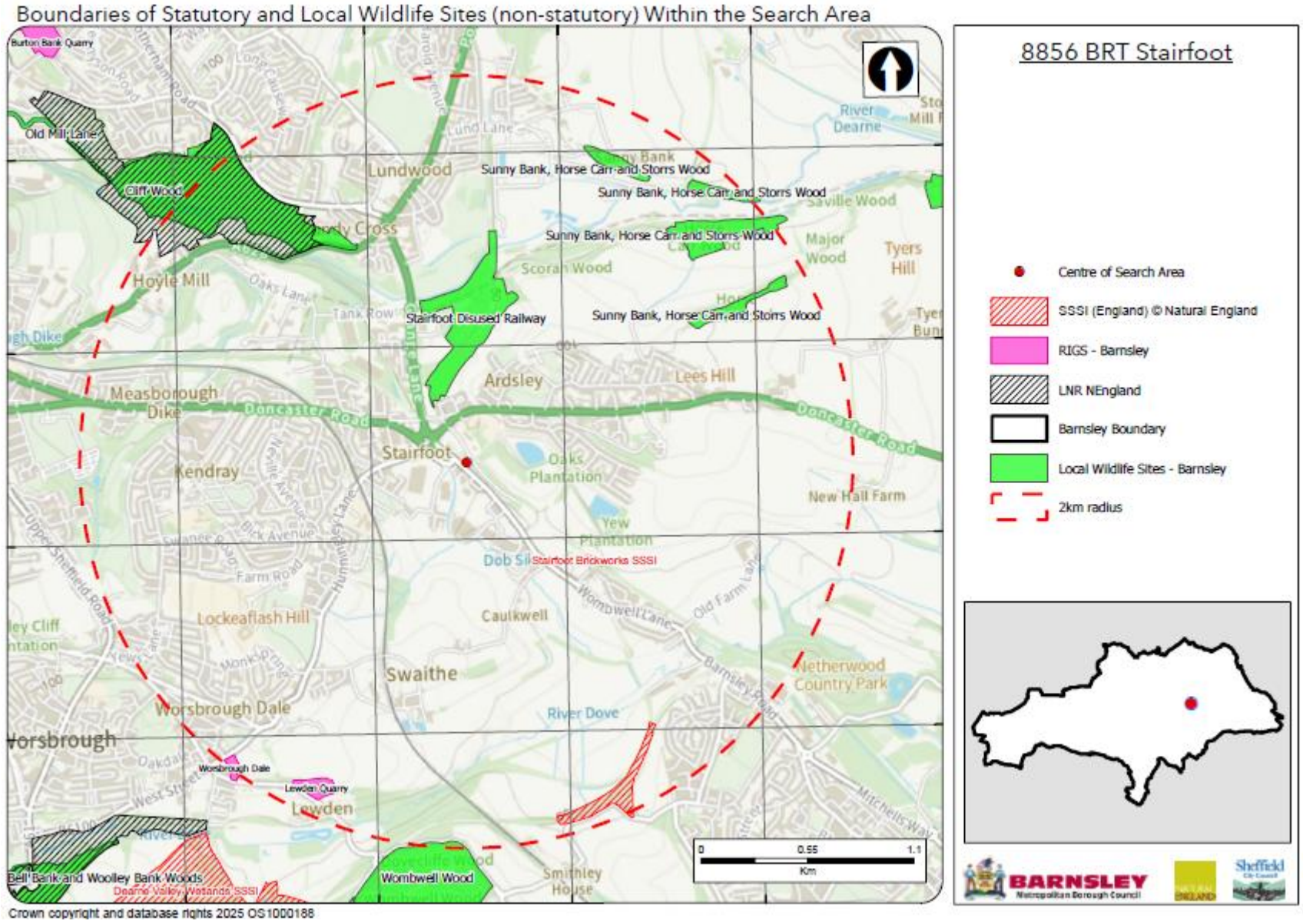
22. There is no mapped ancient woodland (AW) or Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) within 15m of The Site, the nearest being AW at Dob Hill Wood located 630m NE of the Site.
23. There are no records of Ancient Trees in the Site's vicinity, the nearest recorded being located approximately 3km southeast of the Site.

Mapped Priority Habitat

24. The deciduous woodland on the opposite side of the footpath/Trans-Pennine trail is mapped as a priority deciduous woodland. The woodland then extends mainly southeast and northwest, with an area of Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land (OMH) priority habitat bordering the woodland, 200m northeast of the Site.

25. However, the development is of such small scale that impacts on these habitats are unlikely. The only potential but small impacts could arise from low levels of localised deposition/chemical alternations during the construction phase, but standard methods for dust and pollution control are considered sufficient for these potential impacts to become negligible.

Figure 3 Records of designated sites within 2km of the Site; Barnsley Biological Records Centre.



Survey

26. The survey was carried out during October 2025[1] and followed the principles of Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010).

27. 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.

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

29. Approximately half of the Site was inaccessible due to very dense vegetation, which could not be closely inspected. This could have concealed invasive species or protected species evidence.

Habitat Appraisal

30. 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.

31. 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

32. 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

33. 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

34. 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

35. 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

36. 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

37. 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.

38. 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.

Condition Assessment

39. Our condition assessment for each habitat described references where available the criteria set out in DEFRA (2024) Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments. A completed version of this spreadsheet is provided digitally with the Biodiversity Gain Report which accompanies this report..

[1] This Report has been prepared during October 2025 following a visit to the Site in October 2025, 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 Medium Distinctiveness

Figure 4 Approximate location and extent of these habitats.

Table 2 Summary of Medium Distinctiveness habitats.

UK Habitats	Summary Description
Other broadleaved woodland	Broadleaved woodland with young, semi-mature and mature trees dominated by silver birch and goat willow. Understorey shrubs were dominated by bramble, wayfaring tree and occasional hawthorn. Other occasional species including oak and ash saplings, rose, and non-natives species such as snowberry and coralberry. Litter pollution was regularly present throughout the parcel. Approximately half of the woodland's understorey vegetation was very dense and could not be inspected closely.
Other neutral grassland	Strip in between public tarmac path and the woodland. Dominant grasses consisted of cock's foot and rough meadow grass. Common forbs consisted of white and red clover, dandelion, mouse ear chickweed and ribwort/broadleaved plantain. Also occasionally encountered were cow parsley, creeping thistle, common nettle and yarrow. The sward was generally short but with some localised taller areas over 15-40cm. Significant areas of bare ground due to trampling were noted and overall, no more than 6 species per square metre were present.

Habitats of Medium Distinctiveness

Figure 5 Woodland and grassland, litter. Facing NW.

Figure 6 Woodland understorey.

Figure 7 Dense vegetation.

Figure 8 Grassland with significant bare ground.

Figure 9 Grassland in lusher areas.

Faunal Appraisal

40. 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

41. There are no ponds within 250m of the Site. Two ponds are located within 500. The pond to the northwest is separated from the Site by several roads. The pond to the northeast is connected to the Site via areas of woodland.

42. There are three records of amphibians within the search area, consisting of two common frog and one common toad, the nearest being a common frog located 1.6km by Barnsley Nature Reserve.

Field Evidence

43. The woodland constitutes suitable terrestrial habitats for amphibians, however there are no waterbodies for breeding amphibians on Site or within close proximity.

Summary Evaluation

44. Although the Site is connected to one off-Site pond, this pond is located beyond the 250m zone of influence set by Natural England District Level Licencing (DLL) as being the distance by which offences are likely to occur (should GCN be present). Furthermore, the complete absence of records within 2km means GCN presence is unlikely.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

45. No further surveys or precautions are considered necessary.

Figure 10 Ponds mapped in relation to the Site.

Bats

Desk evidence

46. Fifty-three records of bats were returned by the desk study. Species consisted of common and soprano pipistrelles, noctules, Daubenton's, Natterer's, and other unidentified myotis or other bat species.

47. The nearest record consisted of two noctules foraging by the woodland 640m southeast of the Site in 2014. The nearest roost was of a common pipistrelle located 1200m northwest in 2014.

Field Evidence (Roosting)

48. There are no buildings on-Site.

49. Trees have been inspected for roost suitability. A decaying goat willow (T1) showed significant gaps such as lifted bark which could be used sporadically by individual bats (PRF-I), however its location close to the ground, limited shelter potential and the cluttered vegetation surrounding it means regular use or use by significant numbers is very unlikely.

Field Evidence (foraging and commuting)

50. The Site is a very small parcel of land, and as such is unlikely to contribute much to local foraging resources.

51. The Site forms part of a network of habitat which could provide good commuting habitat locally. However, its loss is unlikely to impact on the overall commuting potential of the area given its small size.

Summary Evaluation

52. The Site's size suggests that it will not be important to this group.

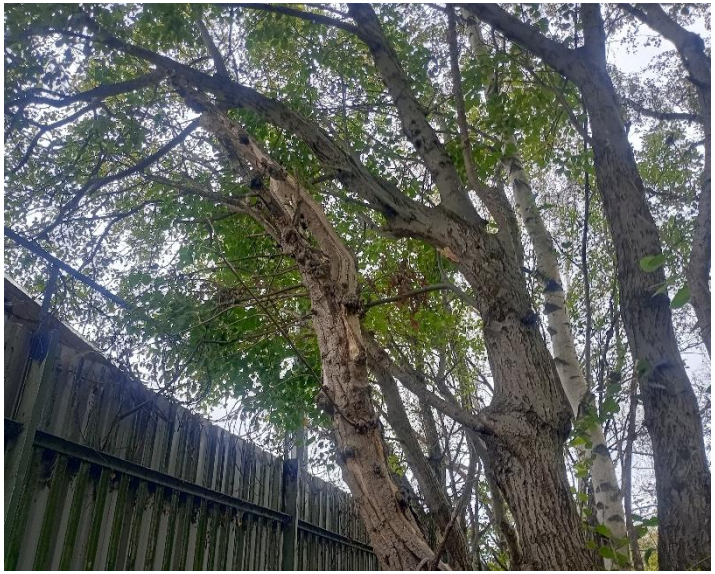
Further Surveys and Recommendations

53. Further surveys are not recommended.

54. Soft felling of T1 is recommended as a precaution.

Figure 11 Tree location.

Figure 12 T1.



Birds

Desk Evidence

55. Over a thousand four-hundred records of birds were returned within the search area, the vast majority located either by Dearne Valley Park nature reserve/ Dearne Valley wetlands and Horse Carr Woods.

56. The nearest records were of common waterfowl such as mallard, shoveler, moorhen or gadwall by the pond 300m northwest of the Site.

Field Evidence

57. The Site provides breeding and foraging opportunities for common urban and woodland species only, in particular the woodland area.

58. A small number of common bird species were noted during the survey including robin and magpie.

Summary Evaluation

59. Based on its size the Site will not be important to local bird populations, with better suited habitats in particular for wetland species in the vicinity. Better and bigger habitat is also available in the surrounding areas for woodland species.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

60. No further surveys are considered necessary to demonstrate current baseline in respect of birds.

61. Standard precautions apply in respect of restrictions on clearing vegetation during the nesting season.

Badgers

Desk evidence

62. There are records of badgers in the area, the nearest being located 1km east in an area not well connected to the Site.

Field Evidence

63. The Site provides potential habitat for sett building in the areas of woodland and dense understorey. However, the woodland parcel's small size and location with regular disturbance makes their presence here somewhat unlikely, with better suited habitat available in the vicinity.

64. No evidence of badger was found. Access throughout the areas of dense vegetation was not possible for close inspection, however no obvious signs of access were found by the area's perimeter.

Summary Evaluation

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

Further Surveys and Recommendations

66. No further surveys recommended.

Hedgehogs (NERC Act 2006/Local BAP)

Desk evidence

67. Hedgehogs are recorded within the search area.

Field Evidence

68. No evidence of hedgehogs was found on-Site.

Summary Evaluation

69. The Site provides suitable habitat for this species and at least occasional presence should be assumed.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

70. Presence assumed; no further surveys are considered necessary however pre-clearance checks by an ecologist and directional clearance of habitats is recommended to allow escape to surrounding habitats.

Reptiles

Desk evidence

71. Records of common lizard and grass snake have been returned for the area, the nearest being of grass snake by the Dearne Valley Nature Park approximately 1.4km northwest.

Field Evidence

72. The Site provides some cover habitat in the woodland but limited to no and basking habitats.

73. No field evidence was found.

Summary Evaluation

74. Due to its small size, location adjacent to regularly disturbed and built-up areas, and isolation from much better habitats adjacent, reptiles are assessed as likely absent from the Site.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

75. No further surveys or precautions are considered necessary.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

76. 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.

77. No INNS were noted during survey[2].

Survey constraints

78. This survey is constrained by the presence of areas that were inaccessible due to the density of vegetation.

79. 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.

80. This Site presents a small risk of supporting undetected INNS based on the following factors:

    - Areas of the Site inaccessible to survey
    - Potential for tipping of material

81. 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 and Opportunities

Habitat Value

82. 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 report on Biodiversity Gain sets out the position of the Site in terms of measured biodiversity.

83. Irrespective of the Biodiversity Gain process, development should still seek to retain what is best about the Site.

84. However, all the habitats on-Site are of Medium distinctiveness and the Site is therefore uniform in terms of potential impacts.

85. This means that the loss of habitats on-Site will require bespoke compensation i.e. from habitats from the same broad category as those which are lost (i.e. woodland and grassland) or from habitats of a higher distinctiveness category such as lowland meadows.

Faunal constraints

86. No faunal constraints have been identified beyond soft felling of T1.and precautionary clearance in relation to hedgehog.

Ecological opportunities

87. Opportunities on this Site are limited due to its small size and full commercial use plans. If building(s) are to be erected, installing roosting or nesting features on new buildings would be recommended.

Figure 13 Habitat distinctiveness and on-Site opportunities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Planning considerations		
Recommendation	**Rationale**	**When**
R1 Fauna	- Soft felling of T1 - Directional clearance of habitats to allow safe egress to surrounding habitats	During habitat clearance
R1 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, and the biodiversity gain hierarchy of Avoid–Enhance–Create–Offset 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
R2 Design	Make sure your design team follows ecological advice to and make sure there are no design conflicts. Decide on the extent of red-line vs blue/black-line land. Minimising the extent of your red line can limit exposure to BNG, but can also leave you needing separate legal agreements to use off-Site land for BNG delivery. Work out at an early stage what is right for your project. Your planning consultant should be able to help with this decision.	During the design process
R3 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Carry out a BNG Assessment using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and accompanying Condition sheets produced by Defra.	Already commissioned in conjunction with PEA
R4 Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)	This report summarises all survey findings and assesses the impacts of the scheme in respect of these. Due to the scale of this development and the potential issues at hand it would seem an unlikely requirement, but may be requested by the LPA.	Prior to submission, after a fixed design is agreed and all key additional surveys are completed
R5 Produce a Biodiversity Management Plan	To specify in detail how the development will cater for biodiversity on-Site and to show how habitats incorporated will be managed.	Delivery report Suitable for planning condition
R6 Produce a CEMP (Biodiversity)	To show how the Site will be built without affecting surrounding habitats and minimising risk of affecting protected or notable fauna. The CEMP will detail the following protection measures: • Pre-clearance checks and directional clearance for hedgehogs • Location of Biodiversity Protection zones or fences • Dealing with known or discovered invasive species • Nesting bird management	Delivery report Suitable for planning condition

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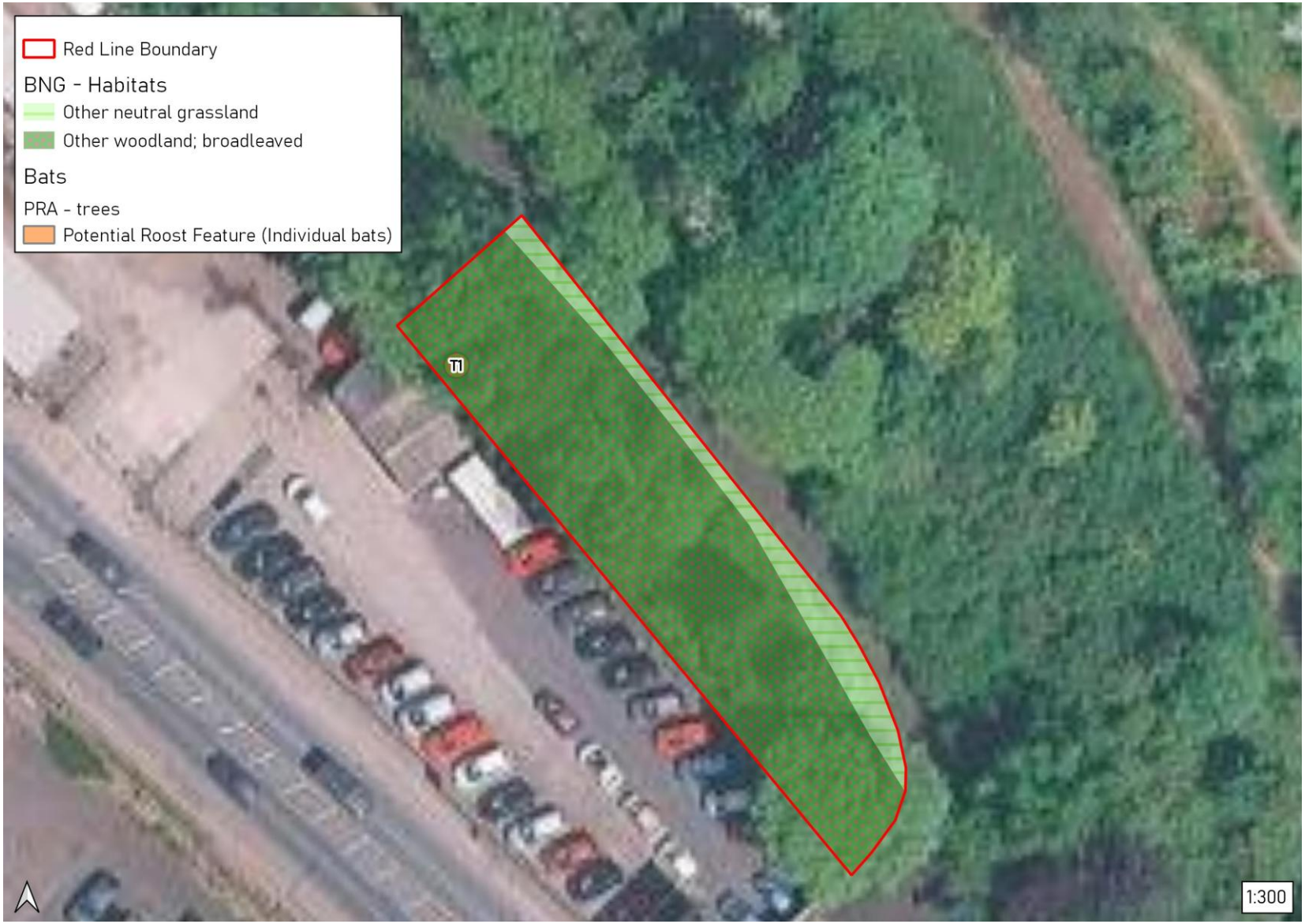
Appendix 1 Habitats and Ecological Features



Appendix 2 List of species recorded

Annual meadow grass	*Poa annua*
Ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*
Bramble	*Rubus fruticosus*
Broadleaved plantain	*Plantago major*
Cinquefoil	*Potentilla repens*
Cock's foot	*Dactylis glomerata*
Common nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Coralberry	*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*
Cow parsley	*Anthriscus sylvestris*
Creeping thistle	*Cirsium arvense*
Dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
Dogrose	*Cornus sanguinea*
Goat willow	*Salix caprea*
Hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*
Mouse ear chickweed	*Cerastium fontanum*
Red clover	*Trifolium pratense*
Ribwort plantain	*Plantago lanceolata*
Rose sp.	*Rosa sp.*
Rough meadow grass	*Poa trivialis*
Silver birch	*Betula pendula*
Snowberry	*Symphoricarpos albus*
Sycamore	*Acer pseudoplatanus*
Wood avens	*Geum urbanum*
White clover	*Trifolium repens*
Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*

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 Sheffield City Council 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 Trees

Suitability	Criteria
None	Either no PRFs in the tree, or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present within the tree.
PRF-I	Potential roost features suitable to support individual or low numbers of bats.
PRF-M	Potential roost features 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 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 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, watervole 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 form 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 (*Reynoutria japonica*), and giant hogweed *(Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Irreplaceable Habitats

Irreplaceable habitats in the context of Biodiversity Net Gain are defined by The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 as including:

- Blanket bog
- Lowland fens
- Limestone pavements
- Coastal sand dunes

Additional descriptive guidance is provided for four further irreplaceable habitats:

Habitat	Description
Ancient woodland	Ancient woodland is areas of woodland that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600. Ancient woodland includes– (i) Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands (ii) Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (iii) Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland (iv) Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland
Ancient trees and veteran trees	Ancient and veteran trees can be found as individual trees or collections of trees in any setting. Ancient trees have passed beyond maturity into an ancient life stage or are old in comparison with other trees of the same species which exhibit one or more of the following– (i) demonstrably great age relative to others of the same species (ii) changes to their crown and trunk development indicative of the ancient life stage Veteran trees are mature trees that share physical and other characteristics in common with ancient trees, due to their life or environment, but are neither developmentally nor chronologically ancient. All ancient trees are veteran trees, but not all veteran trees are ancient. Veteran and ancient trees which have died are still recognised as such because they retain significant biodiversity value for many decades.
	Veteran trees exhibit one or more of the following– (i) significant decay features such as deadwood, hollowing or signs of advanced decay in the trunk or major limbs (ii) a large girth, depending on and relative to species, site and management history (iii) a high value for nature, especially in hosting rare or specialist fungi, lichens and deadwood invertebrates
Spartina saltmarsh swards	*Spartina* (cord-grass) saltmarsh swards colonise a wide range of substrates, from very soft muds to shingle, in areas sheltered from strong wave action. It occurs on the seaward fringes of saltmarshes and creek-sides and may colonise old pans in the upper saltmarsh.
Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub	Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous (salt-tolerant) scrub develops in the uppermost levels of saltmarshes, often where there is a transition from saltmarsh to dunes, or in some cases where dunes overlie shingle. The form that most closely resembles the scrub vegetation of the Mediterranean is restricted to south and south-east England and is formed predominantly of bushes of shrubby sea-blite *Suaeda vera* and sea purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*.

Planning Policy/Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in December 2024. 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" (P125).

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 (P187). 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" (P188).

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" (P192).

It is made clear in P193 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.