Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Upper Hoyland Road, Barnsley

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Non-technical Summary

Purpose of report

This report is produced to present an initial assessment of the potential ecological constraints and opportunities relating to a Site known as land off Upper Hoyland Lane; to inform the Site's potential for development.

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

Methodology

The report is based on a Desk Study of designated wildlife sites and records of protected or notable species, and an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Bat Roost Suitability Assessment carried out in July 2018.

Findings Key-Points

The Site can be considered to support habitats of low ecological value which are not considered to be a constraint to development.

Further survey is recommended with regard to bats.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Riva Homes to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land off Upper Hoyland Road, Hoyland, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S74 9NL (SE361012).

2. This report is produced with reference to British Standard BS42020 'Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development' and the CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

3. Victoria Baker has over 3 years' experience carrying out Preliminary Ecological Appraisals. She holds an MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation and has since received extensive in-house training alongside species identification courses provided by CIEEM and FSC.

Scope

4. The proposed development site 'the Site' comprises a collection of farm buildings and stables, surrounded by hardstanding. It is defined in Figure 1 below.

5. The assessment uses a 2km area of search around the Site for records of protected and notable species and locally or nationally designated wildlife sites.

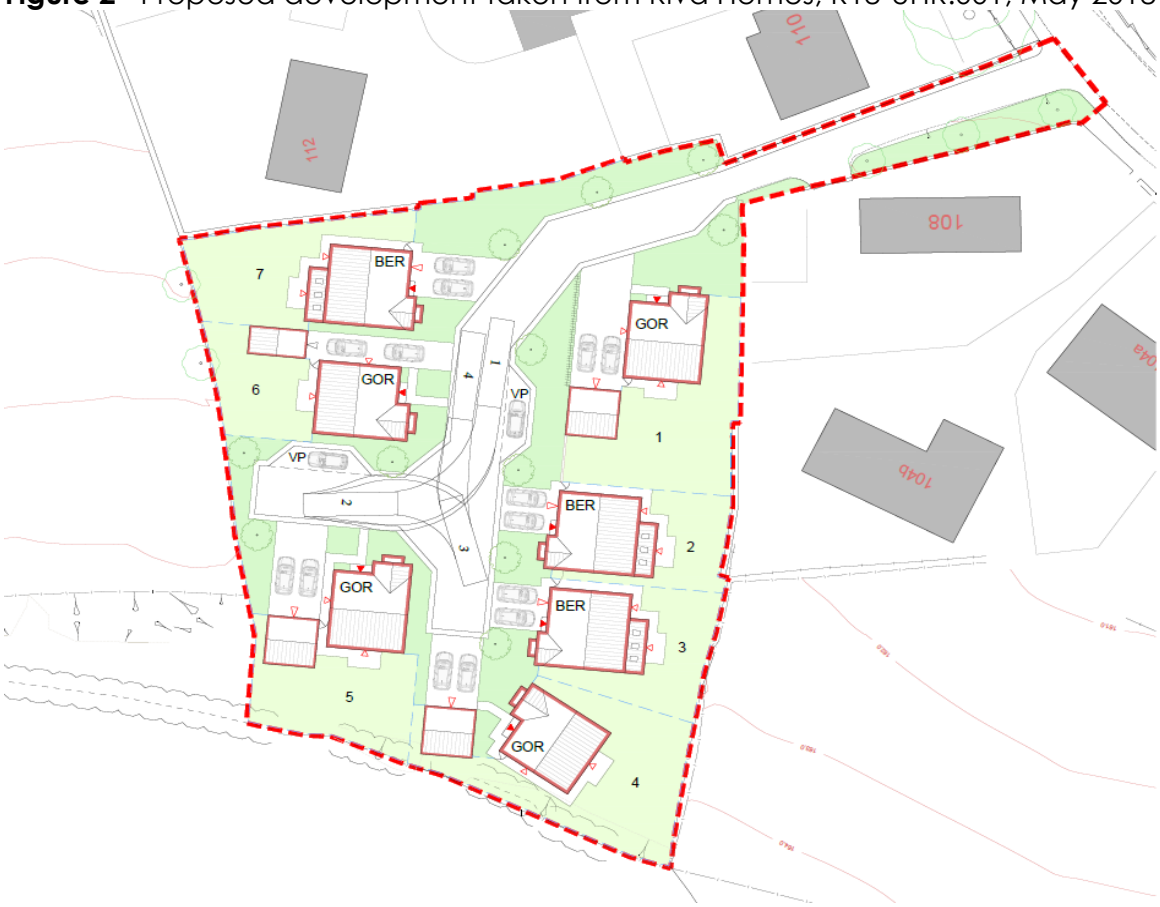
Figure 1 The Site



Proposals

6. Proposals for the Site look to construct seven detached residential properties with associated access roads, parking and gardens.

Figure 2 Proposed development taken from Riva Homes, R18-UHR:001, May 2018



Site Context

7. The Site is located on the western edge of Upper Hoyland; a hamlet which merges with the town of Hoyland to the south and lies approximately 3 miles south of Barnsley.

8. The Site is bound by Upper Hoyland road and residential properties to the north and partially east, with pasture in all other directions.

9. Beyond these immediate boundaries, the local landscape is characterised by residential development to the south, west and east associated with Hoyland and other neighbouring settlements. To the south, although separated by the A6195, is open countryside, dominated by woodland.

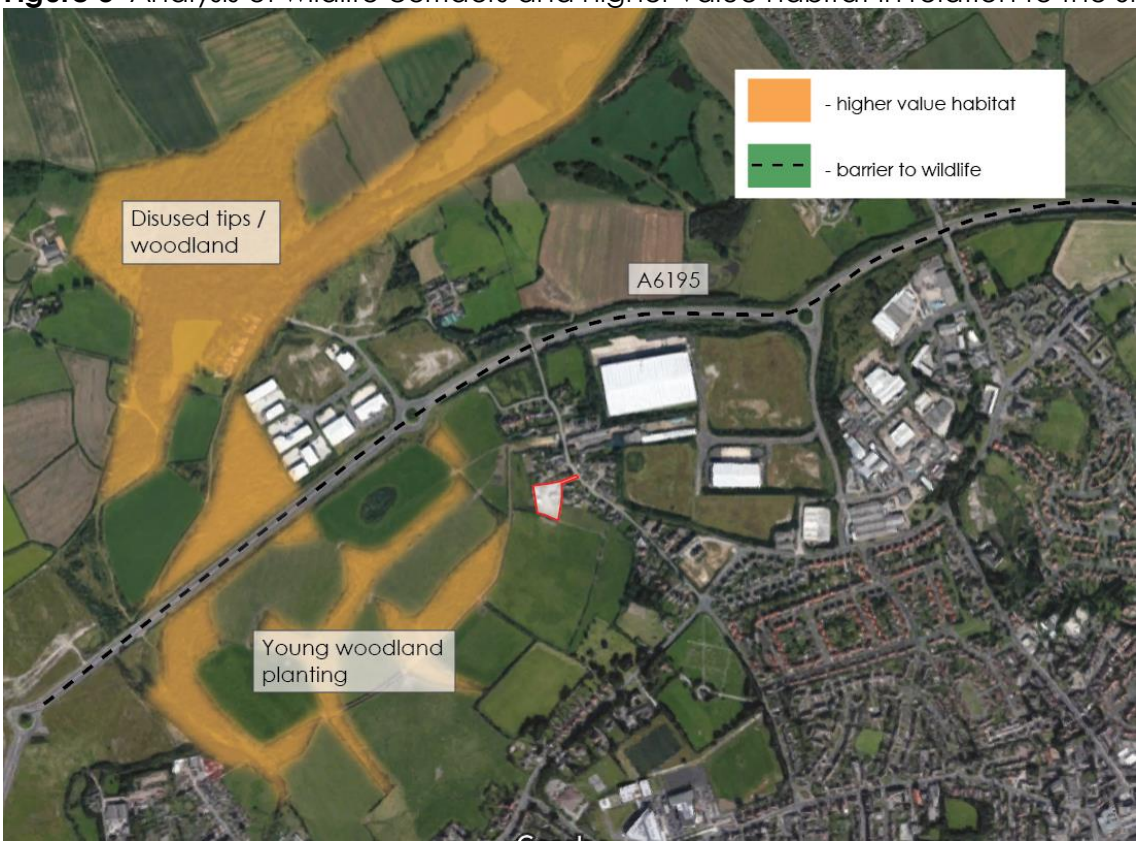
Wildlife corridors

10. No significant wildlife corridors are found in close proximity to the Site.

11. The most noteworthy area of higher value habitat would be the swathe of woodland / disused tips found c.650m north of the Site which extends northeast meeting other woodland blocks, encompassing dismantled railway lines, minor watercourses and waterbodies. However, this landscape feature is considered separated from Site by the busy A6195.

12. Small areas of high value habitat are found closer to the Site, these being small blocks of woodland of <20 years of age, planted throughout an area of pasture fields. A narrow section of scrub links the Site to these plantation blocks.

Figure 3 Analysis of wildlife corridors and higher value habitat in relation to the Site.



Water bodies

13. One standing water body is found on mapping within a 500m radius of the Site, this being a large pond c.470m northeast, assumed to be a fishing lake and separated from Site by the A6195.

Designated Sites

Statutory Designations

14. A search has been made to identify any nationally designated sites within a 2km radius of the Site, and for internationally designated sites within a 10km radius. The Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area (NIA) is the only statutory designated site which falls within these search parameters, and which incorporates land within the application Site.

    Taken from Natural England, this NIA aims to:

    - restore the ecological functionality of the river, its floodplain and its link to habitats on surrounding sandstone and limestone hills,
    - create a 1300ha core of wetland and woodland habitats,
    - utilise 2690ha of open land and reclaimed industrial areas whose biodiversity areas will be enhanced,
    - link up core areas and target farmland areas of poor ecological functionality covering 1700ha.

15. The Site being a collection of farm buildings and hardstanding is not recognised as any of the habitats detailed above. The Site could not be expected to constitute to land targeted at by the NIA aims, and as such has no relevance to development of the Site.

    SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs)

16. The Site does not fall within any IRZ.

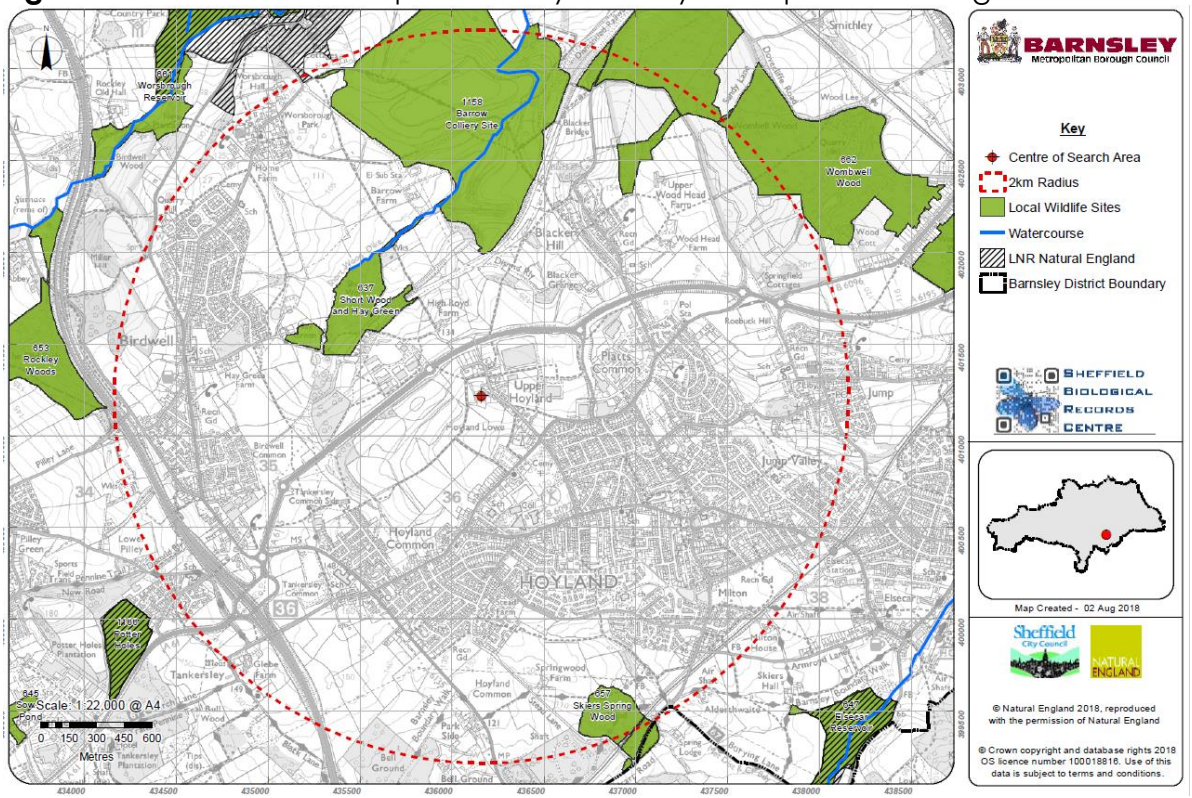
Non-Statutory Designations

17. There are four locally designated sites within 2km of the Site, all designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS's), as detailed below:

    - 637 Short Wood and Hay Green LWS c.590m northwest
    - 1158 Barrow Colliery Site LWS c.720m north
    - 662 Wombwell Wood LWS c.1.3km northeast
    - 657 Skiers Spring Wood c.1.7km south

18. Based on the distance between the Site and these designations, the lack of any hydrological linkage, and the nature of the proposals, development here is considered very unlikely to impact on the LWS's.

Figure 4 Local wildlife sites provided by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.



Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

Method

19. The survey was carried out during July 2018[1] and followed Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010).

Limitations

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

Results

21. The following habitats were identified within the Site and on its immediate boundaries:

- Buildings
- Hardstanding
- Scrub

Buildings

22. A number of buildings are found within the Site, ranging between large stone barns to metal storage containers. These buildings are described in detail in the Bat Roost Suitability Assessment later in the report.

Hardstanding

23. Hardstanding occupies the majority of the Site, having been colonised by a variety of tall ruderal species including cock's foot (Dactylis glomerate), perennial rye (Lolium perenne), nettle (Urtica dioica), common sorrel (Rumex acetosa), ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata), fat hen (Chenopodium album), greater willowherb (Epilobium hirsutum), rosebay willowherb (Chamaenerion angustifolium), male fern (Dryopteris filix-mas), smooth sow thistle (Sonchus oleraceus), thistles (Cirsium vulgare spp.), cow parsley (Anthriscus sylvestris), white clover (Trifolium repens), scentless mayweed (Tripleurospermum inodorum), common dock (Rumex acetosa), ragwort (Jacobaea vulgaris), and common knotgrass (Polygonum aviculare).

24. Where soil has accumulated to the south of the Site, rank grassland is beginning to establish over the hard standing. This is colonised by coarse / arable grasses alongside the aforementioned ruderal species. Grass species here consist of false oat grass

(Arrhenatherum elatius), Yorkshire fog (Holcus lanatus), perennial rye, cock's foot, tufted hair grass (Deschampsia cespitosa), alongside various cereal crops.



Figure 5

Ruderal species colonising hardstanding



Figure 6

Rank grassland type habitat growing over hardstanding

Scrub

25. Scrub species have colonised parts of the southern and eastern boundaries. Elder (Sambucus nigra) is the dominant species, with smaller amounts of holly (Ilex aquifolium), broom (Cytisus scoparius), bramble (Rubus fruticosus), and field bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis).

26. Where the eastern boundary adjoins a neighbouring garden, these scrub species are intermixed with leylandii and a pine (Pinus sp.) tree, these being rooted off-Site.



Figure 7

Scrub along southern boundary

Invasive Non-Native Species

27. No species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were noted at the Site during the survey[1]

[1] Note while our ecologists are trained in the identification of invasive species this report is not a dedicated invasive species survey. 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.

Fauna

Bats

28. Forty-four records of bats have been returned, relating to Leisler', noctule, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, whiskered and indeterminate bat species.

29. No records relate to the Site or the surrounding properties within Upper Hoyland.

30. Of the records, 7 detail roosts or possible roosts, the majority of which relate to Worsbrough Hall >1.9km north of the Site.

31. No significant roost records are found in any close proximity to the Site.

Bat Roosting Suitability Assessment

32. Bat roosting potential of the building was classified according to the following criteria set out in Table 1, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2016).

Table 1 Bat Roosting Suitability of buildings and trees

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

33. Five main buildings are found on Site, as described below and numbered in D-3576-01.1.

Building 1

34. Single-storey cavity stone building, open to the apex internally, used for storage / stables. This building adjoins others on its eastern and southern elevations. The roof structure is double pitched, fitted with stone tiles.



Figure 8

View of Building 1

35. Access is available into the rubble filled wall cavities both across the northern elevation, and throughout the interior (open access is available into the interior through unglazed windows and doors). These crevices within the walls provide numerous potential roost features (PRF's).



Figure 9

Missing pointing on the northern elevation allows access into the wall cavity

36. The stone tiles across the roof structure are lifted and missing. However, the lack of roofing membrane limits the potential use of these features and instead are likely to only be of use to single bats on an occasional basis.

37. Internally, gaps at the wall tops and between the wooden rafters and purlins also provide features which could be used by roosting bats.



Figure 10

Gaps at the wall tops and between timber purlins

Building 2

38. L-shaped, two-storey cavity stone building set across two levels. The roof is double pitched, fitted with corrugated asbestos. The building is currently used as a stable block.



Figure 11

View of Building 2

39. Again, many gaps are present within the external and internal walls which would allow access into the wall cavities. Where stone / wooden lintels and doorframes are present, these do not sit flush with the wall and present additional access points into the wall cavities. Gaps were also noted within the wooden door frames themselves.



Figure 12

Gaps within wooden door frame

40. Gaps are noted internally at the wall tops, and where the rafters / purlins meet this presents a roosting feature.

41. Roofing membrane is fitted under the asbestos sheets. Where access is available between the membrane and asbestos, this void presents a PRF; albeit of limited value.

42. Access is available into the upper storey through unglazed windows on the western and southern elevations and at the wall tops. This loft space presents a large void, potentially suited to bats that require a large flight space.



Figure 13

Gaps within wooden door frame

Building 3

43. Two-storey barn, with cavity stone walls, and double pitched asbestos sheet roof. The southern section of the barn is open to the apex with an open loft space within the northern section.



Figure 14

View of Building 3

44. Numerous gaps are available into the large rubble filled cavity walls, both externally and internally.

45. The wooden lintel which sits above the doorway on the eastern elevation has cracks between its planks, and this presents a potential roost feature.



Figure 15

Gaps within wooden door frame

46. Wooden support beams above the windows also present gaps between the boarding.



Figure 16

Gaps within wooden frames which sit above windows

47. Access into the building's interior is available through un-sheeted sections of the roof and windows. The old wooden rafters and purlins present potential roost features where they meet each other and the overlying asbestos sheets.



Figure 17

Gaps within wooden door frame

Building 4

48. Long single-storey stable block, constructed with cavity stone walls on the northern, western and eastern elevation, with wooden panelled stable doors on the southern. The roof is slightly pitched fitted with corrugated asbestos sheets.



Figure 18

View of Building 4

49. Occasional gaps are noted into the cavity walls throughout.

50. Various small gaps are noted between the rafters and asbestos sheeting, which do provide a number of features, albeit of generally low value.



Figure 19

View of interior

Building 5

51. Large, open storage structure with a mix of metal / asbestos sheet and wooden panel sections making up the roof and wall structure.



Figure 20

View of Building 5

52. Where gaps between wooden beams are present, these are thought unsuitable for roosting bats given the open nature of the buildings and subsequent light levels.

Other buildings

53. Various other buildings / structures are found across the Site including horse boxes and metal storage sheds; these do not have any potential to support roosting bats.

Table 2 Summary of each building Bat Roosting Suitability

Building	Features	Roosting Suitability
1	Gaps into wall cavities, gaps at wall tops and between rafters / purlins	Moderate
2	Gaps into wall cavities, gaps at wall tops and between rafters / purlins, loft space	Moderate
3	Gaps into cavity walls, around wooden lintels / door frames, gaps between rafters / purlins / asbestos roof	Moderate
4	Gaps in wall cavities, gaps between rafters and asbestos roof	Low
5	N/A	Negligible

Foraging / commuting

54. The Site presents very limited foraging / commuting features, with bats likely to gravitate to the areas of higher value habitat to the north and west of the Site.

Amphibians

55. Five records of great crested newt have been returned. There are also records of common frog, common toad and smooth newt in the Study Area but not the Site.

56. No waterbodies suited to amphibian breeding were found on Site. One is shown on mapping, this being a large pond c.470m northeast, and separated from Site by the A6195. Any amphibian populations present within this pond are highly unlikely to use the Site.

57. All the great crested newt (GCN) records relate to Rockingham colliery or Tankersley Common, >850m from the Site.

58. The Site is isolated from any potential breeding habitat, and with the lack of GCN records in any close proximity to the Site, it is considered to be unimportant to this species group, and the presence of GCN can reasonably be ruled out.

Birds

59. Records have been returned for a range of common birds within the desk Study Area. None of these records come from within the Site.

60. The buildings and areas of scrub are suitable for attracting a typical range of common bird species associated with gardens and farmland during the nesting season, with a number of swallows observed nesting within the barn buildings. Precaution is therefore advised with regards to clearance required to facilitate development.

Badger

61. No evidence of badger activity was noted during the walkover survey, and as such, current likely absence can be reasonably concluded.

Key Findings

62. The Site provides a small collection of habitats, all of which are considered to be of low ecological value and do not constrain the proposed development.

63. Those buildings classed as having bat roosting suitability will require further survey, as detailed below.

64. Artificial nest boxes will be incorporated into the planning layout to mitigate for the loss of current nesting habitat. Suitable boxes include the 'No. 10 Schwegler Swallow Nest' which will be installed around the Site in suitable locations, i.e. within open garages.

Ecological Enhancement

65. The requirement for development to make a positive contribution to biodiversity is clearly set out in guidance such as the NPPF and BS:42020 - beyond mitigating or compensating any potential impacts.

66. The following themes provide opportunities for the proposals to deliver such a contribution and can be delivered in a BS42020 Ecological Design Strategy or Landscape and Ecology Management Plan:

- Connectivity could be increased across the Site through the planting of linear features which should include a variety of native shrubs, perennials and small trees which maximize the food resources for invertebrates and birds.

- In areas of public open space, a wildflower mixture could be sown in place of amenity grass, such as the EM2 wildflower seed mix.

- A range of faunal boxes targeted at urban / farmland bird and bat species will be installed around the Site.

Further ecological input required

67. Guidance provided by Clause 8 BS:42020 and ODPM circular 06/05 (2005) makes it clear that proposals and planning decisions should be informed by sufficient information - this is particularly the case in respect of European Protected Species (EPS).

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

Table 3 Additional survey required **pre-planning**

Survey	Rationale	Timing
Bat emergence survey	Bats and their roosts are protected by law*. Two visits are required covering the buildings with *low – moderate* roosting suitability, during the main summer period, which runs from the beginning of May to the end of August / early September.	May - August

* Information on relevant legislation is provided in Appendix 5 of the report

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

Table 4 Additional survey required **pre-commencement**

Survey	Rationale	Timing
Nesting bird surveys	Destruction of active nests is prohibited by law* Survey will be needed prior to the Site clearance (including the buildings) only if carried out during the period March - August (inclusive). This would allow and active nests to be identified and protected.	Immediately prior to clearance

* Information on relevant legislation is provided in Appendix 5 of the report

Appendices

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

References

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Appendix 1 – Extended Phase 1 Habitat Plan

Appendix 2 – Explanatory Notes and Resources Used

Site Context

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

Designated Sites

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

Functional linkage with off-Site habitats

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

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

Method

Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This involves walking the site, mapping and describing different habitats (for example: woodland, grassland, scrub). The survey method was "Extended" in that evidence of fauna and faunal habitat was also recorded (for example droppings, tracks or specialist habitat such as ponds for breeding amphibians). This modified approach to the Phase 1 survey is in accordance with the approach recommended by the Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (IEA, 1995) and Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2012).

Faunal appraisal

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

Records of notable species supplied from a 2km area of search by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough 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.

Evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Species/group	**Habitat**
Hedgehog	Upland Oakwood
Bats	Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Water Vole	Wet Woodland
Otter	Wood Pasture and Parkland
Grey Partridge	Hedgerows
Bittern	Arable Field Margins
Kestrel	Floodplain Grazing Marsh
Little Ringed Plover	Lowland Meadows
Lapwing	Lowland Dry Acidic Grassland
Barn Owl	Lowland Heathland
Skylark	Upland Heathland
Tree Sparrow	Blanket Bog
Twite	Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture
Great Crested Newt	Reedbeds
Salmon	Ponds
Bullhead	Rivers
White-clawed Crayfish	Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land
Glow Worm	
Dingy Skipper	
Bluebell	

Appendix 3 Wildlife Legislation, Policy and Guidance

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

Legislation

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

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

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

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

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010)

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

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended

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

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

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

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)

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

Hedgerows Regulations (1997)

Define and provide protection for Important Hedgerows.

Protection of Badgers Act (1992)

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

Protected Sites

Statutory EU / International Protected Sites

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

Statutory UK Protected Sites

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

Locally Protected Sites

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

Protected Species

European Protected Species

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

UK Protected Species

A number of species (including bats, GCN, 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 (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed *(Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Planning Policy / Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published in July 2018 replacing the 2012 version and the majority of previous Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The most relevant paragraphs from the NPPF are set out below.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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