

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Castle Buildings, Hull

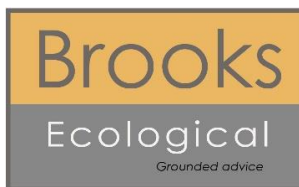
Castle Buildings LLP

Report Reference: R-3936-01A

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Report Title:	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report Castle Buildings, Hull
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Summary

This report is produced to inform Castle Buildings LLP of potential ecological constraints associated with their proposed development site.

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 February 2019.

Findings - Key Points

This site provides habitat of very limited ecological value, the presence of which should not pose any constraint on development.

Despite this, the buildings offer features of bat roosting suitability; the status of roosting bats at the Site should be confirmed through a single evening emergence or dawn re-entry survey. Given the nature of the Site, and future proposals, it may be acceptable to carry out this survey as a condition of planning.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Castle Buildings LLP to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of a site known as Castle Buildings, off Waterhouse Lane, Hull (grid reference TA 09512 28489).
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 early 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.

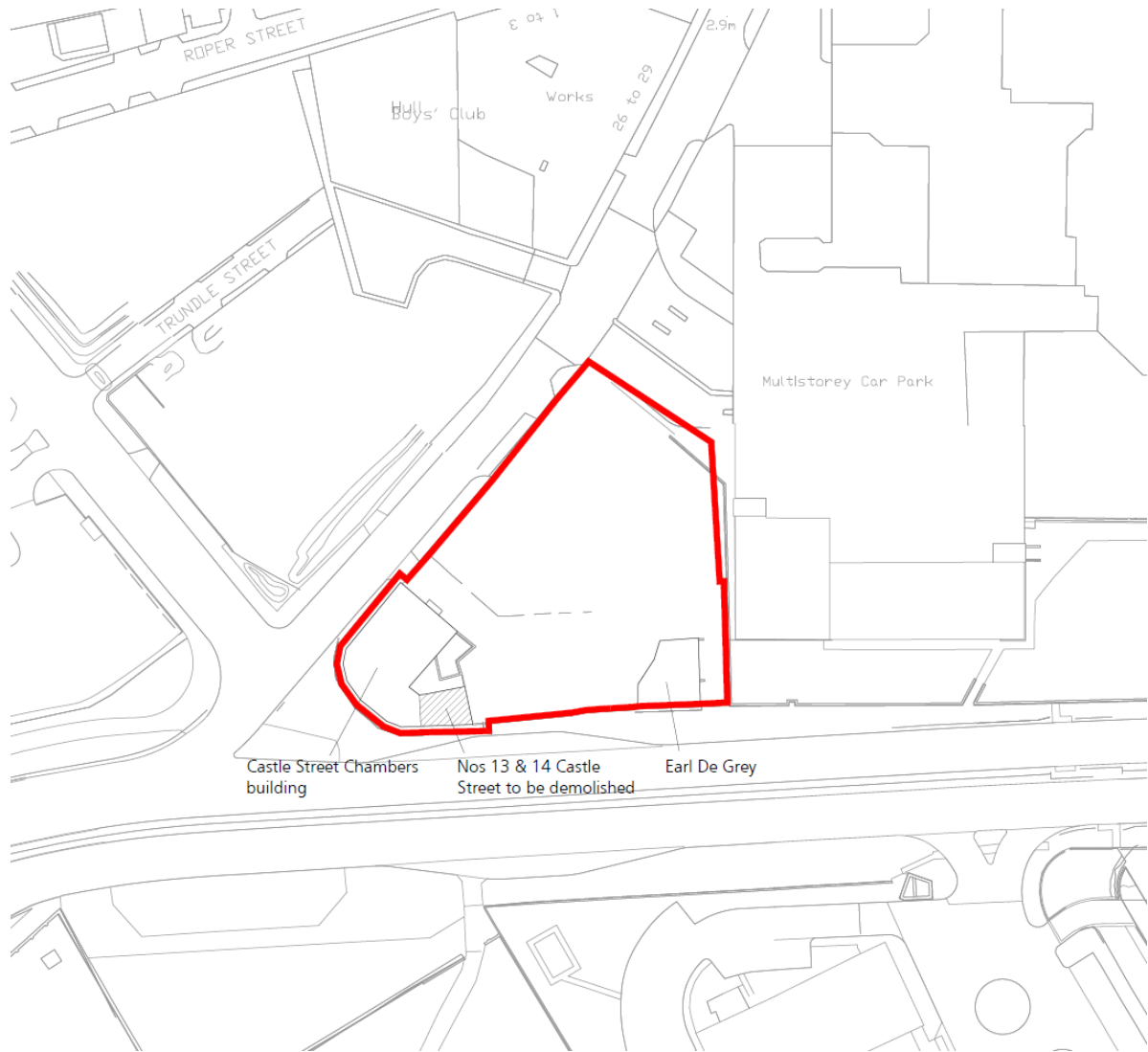
Scope

5. 'The Site' comprises a parcel of land, including two existing buildings located in Hull city centre, as defined in Figure 1 overleaf. This is proposed for conversion of the existing buildings for commercial use, and construction of a new 8 storey hotel building.
6. 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.

Desk Study

7. The Site is located on the southern edge of Hull city centre. Immediate boundaries include Castle Street dual carriage way to the south, a multi storey car park to the east and a small area of public open space to the north west.
8. Beyond the immediate boundaries, dense urban development continues to the north, east and west. Hull Marina is found beyond the dual carriage way to the south, which then gives way to docks and the River Humber.

Figure 1 The Site (red line boundary).
(Taken from DLA Architecture drawing number 2016-223/805).



Water Bodies

9. There are no standing water bodies on Site, though aerial photography indicates the presence of four standing water bodies with 500m. The closest is an ornamental feature surrounding the Princes Quay Shopping Centre, 50m east at its closest point. This appears to be linked to the Marina, 85m south east at its closest. Both these water bodies ultimately link to the river. The Queens Gardens public open space includes 3 ponds, 2 of which are within 500m of the site, the closest being 420m north east.

Figure 2 Water Bodies within 500m of the Site.



Wildlife Corridors

10. The River Humber 460m south, and River Hull 640m east provide the major corridors through the landscape, however, their proximity to dense urban development limits their value for the movement of wildlife.
11. Despite its proximity, the site is not well linked to either of these large-scale corridors, being severed by continuous development.
12. Hull city centre provides relatively few pockets of urban green space which would constitute higher value habitat, Victoria Park being the most significant which sits 1km east and is entirely disconnected from the site.

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



Designated Sites

Statutory Designations

13. 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 results are shown in the below table.

Table 1 Statutory Designated Sites.

Site Name	Distance from Site	Designation	Summary Interest
Humber Estuary	420m South	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	The primary qualifying habitats of the SAC being Estuaries and Mud flats and sandflats not covered by saltwater at low tide.
		Special Protection Area (SPA)	Primary qualifying species of the SPA being avocet, bar-tailed godwit, bittern, black-tailed godwit, dunlin, golden plover, hen harrier, knot, little tern, marsh harrier, redshank, ruff and shelduck alongside the general, non-breeding waterbird assemblage.
		Ramsar	
		Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Qualifying features of the SSSI and Ramsar Site overlap those listed above, as well as including a number of geological, and geomorphological reasons.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs)

- The Site lies within the 500m IRZ for the Humber Estuary SSSI. Despite the Site's proximity to the SSSI, its development is unlikely to meet any of the criteria which requires consultation between the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and Natural England (NE). The Site's location, and the scale and nature of the proposals mean it is unlikely to impact on this SSSI.

Non-Statutory Designations

- A request for information on locally designated Site's within 2km of the application Site was made to the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC). As illustrated overleaf, there are fourteen locally designated Site's within 2km. These are all listed as Site's of Nature Conservation Importance. These are listed below. The Site is considered to be sufficiently distant or found without functional links to any of these local Site's to mean impacts are considered highly unlikely.

Site Code	Site Name	Easting	Northing
84	West Park	507508	429013
86	Land to the east of the Circle cricket ground	508025	428917
87	Strip of land north of Circle cricket ground	507678	429189
88	Hymers College grounds	507740	429256
373	Land to the east of Hymers College grounds	508066	429101
89	Land to rear of Hymas Avenue	508064	429442
100	General Cemetery, Spring Bank West	507764	429626
111	Dismantled low level railway line	508480	430006
108	Pearson Park	508544	430346
255	Mudflats to south of Sammy's point	510152	428192
169	Beverley & Barmston Drain	508574	431886
167	Foredyke Stream cycle track - south of Chapman Street	510614	429704
364	Land to the west of Northumberland Avenue almshouses	509549	430257
168	River Hull (including banks)	509372	432084

Figure 4 Locally designated sites provided by NEYEDC.



Survey

Method

16. The survey was carried out during February 2019¹ and followed Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010).

Limitations

17. The survey was carried out in winter when many plant species have died back however the habitat types could still be assessed at this time by the surveyor.
18. Enough time was afforded the surveyor to carry out the survey. The survey was not constrained by poor weather.
19. Buildings on Site were not internally accessed for health and safety reasons.

Results

20. The Site is almost entirely occupied by hard standing and built development. It is currently used as car parking, with both buildings currently disused.
21. The following habitats were identified within the Site and on its immediate boundaries:
 - Hardstanding
 - Buildings

Hardstanding

22. Approximately three quarters of the site area is occupied by tarmac hardstanding. This is found in sound condition, largely devoid of any vegetation. Along the southern most margin where tarmac is broken up or hard core is present instead, very small amounts of wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*) and groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) are noted.
23. A single early mature sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is present within the hard standing, on the Site's southern boundary.

¹ This Report has been prepared during March 2019 following a visit to the site in February 2019 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.



Figure 5

Showing general condition of hard standing



Figure 6

Sycamore on southern boundary

Buildings

24. The Site includes two buildings, both of which are Grade II listed and currently unused. A pub occupies the Site's south east corner, while the Castle Street Chambers building occupies the Site's south west corner. Buildings are described in detail in the later faunal appraisal section of this report.

Fauna

Bats

25. Seven records of bats have been returned from within the search radius. These records cover common pipistrelle, pipistrelle species bats and one record of long eared species bat. Only one of these is provided with precise location information, this being a Natural England Roost record of pipistrelle species bat, recorded in 2014 at a Site 1.9km north west. None of the records originate from within the site, or close proximity to its boundaries.
26. The Site, occupied entirely by buildings and hard standing provides negligible value for foraging or commuting bats. Its redevelopment is highly unlikely to impact the activity of local bat populations.

Bat Roost Suitability Assessment

Castle Street Chambers

27. Built around 1890 the Castle Street Chambers building is grade 2 listed but found in a very poor state of repair. It is built with solid brick walls with ashlar dressings and gabled and hipped slate roofs with 5 ridge and single gable stacks.
28. This building is now entirely surrounded by a complex scaffold which is almost entirely sheeted to the south and west, the northern and eastern elevations are partially sheeted. The scaffold is topped by a corrugated sheet metal roof.
29. Detailed inspection of this building was not possible for safety reasons. However, from outside the scaffold and wooden hoarding numerous gaps in mortar along the gable verges could be seen, small crevices in brick work mortar were noted and numerous missing or slipped slates and ridge tiles could be seen allowing access to the roofs interior structure.
30. The scaffold and sheeting of the building, and its location within a city centre limits its potential to support roosting bats. However, the high number of potential roost features mean roosting, particularly by low numbers of opportunistic species such as common pipistrelle, cannot be ruled out. This building is therefore assessed with reference to the Bat Conservation Trust Survey Guidelines as providing Low Bat Roost Suitability.



Figure 7

General view of Castle Street Chambers



Figure 8

Close up view of building behind scaffold

Earl de Grey Public House

31. The building in the Site's south eastern corner is the former Earl de Grey pub, also having Grade 2 listed status. The original portion of the pub was constructed in the mid-19th Century, with later additions being constructed on its northern elevation. The building is of rendered brick construction over three floors with a multi pitched slate roof reflecting various additions to the building.

32. This building is largely found in sound repair with the render of the walls being in good condition preventing access to any cavity that may be present within the walls or gaps at the wall tops.
33. Similarly, the roof was found in sound repair except for two small areas of slipped, raised or missing slates. These features potentially allow bats access to suitable roost features within the slates or internal structure.
34. Where inspection of the verges and eaves was possible, they were found to be largely well sealed. A small number of exceptions being noted on the western elevation where mortar has dropped from the verge or the barge board is found to be very slightly raised.
35. This building is also considered to have Low Bat Roost Suitability.



Figure 9

General view of Earl de Grey pub.

**Figure 10**

Shows general condition of verges, eaves and roof. Small gap in verge highlighted.

Amphibians

36. NEYEDC hold no records of amphibians within 2km of the application Site. The Site provides no suitable breeding habitat while terrestrial habitat is of negligible value to any amphibians.
37. As highlighted in the Desk Study section of this report, Princess Quay and the marina provide standing water bodies near the Site. However, the value of these to breeding amphibians is extremely limited due to the absence of vegetation, steep sides and likelihood that there is some flow between these features and the River Humber. Beyond these, the closest water bodies are well separated from the site by urban development preventing the dispersal of amphibians.
38. A likely absence of amphibians from the Site is concluded.

Birds

39. The Castle Street Chambers Building is likely to support a range of common, urban species which make use of buildings for nesting, including pigeon, starling and house sparrow. Beyond this, the Site provides very little potential habitat for nesting birds.
40. The Site will not contribute habitat which would be used by the SPA qualifying species, nor would its redevelopment have any impact on their interests or use of the estuary habitats.

41. As with most sites the standard precaution in relation to birds would apply: To prevent the proposed works impacting on nesting birds, work to the Castle Street Chambers Building which may affect nest Site's will need to be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season which is 1st March – 31st August inclusive. Any work with the potential to impact nests that is required during the breeding bird season should be preceded by a nesting bird survey to ensure that the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) 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.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

42. 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.
43. No INNS were found on Site².
44. 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, 3rd 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, though in this case the risk of the Site containing undetected INNS is low.

² Note while our ecologists are trained in the identification of invasive species this report is not a dedicated invasive species survey. Detectability of invasive plant species is seasonally variable so, whilst every effort is made, conclusive determination of presence or absence is not always possible through preliminary 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.

Conclusions and Recommendations

45. Redevelopment of this city centre Site appears largely unconstrained by ecology and biodiversity issues, but some additional information and output is likely to be needed to support a planning submission and deal with legal risks.

Table 2 Further survey required

Issue	Why	When calculated on the date of this report.
A single evening bat emergence or dawn re-entry survey should be carried out to clarify the status of roosting bats in both buildings.	Would identify any conflicts between bat roosts and the proposals. Disturbance or destruction of roosts is a criminal offence.	May-August (bat peak activity months)

47. Given the nature of the proposals, and the potential roost types which may be present in buildings such as these in this type of location, any roost found could easily be mitigated for. This would be achieved through the inclusion of bat roost features in replacement buildings. As such, it may be possible to carry out further bat survey as a condition of planning, rather than it being required pre-determination.

Other Recommendations

Table 3 Precautionary survey pre-commencement

Issue	Why	When calculated on the date of this report.
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, work to Castle Street Chambers should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season which is 1st March – 31st August inclusive. Any clearance that is required during the breeding bird season should be preceded by a nesting bird survey to ensure that the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) 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.	Pre-commencement

54. Given the current blanket cover of hard standing and buildings across the Site its redevelopment provides an opportunity to offer ecological enhancement, in line with clearly set out guidance such as the NPPF and BS:42020. This could be detailed in a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, produced as a condition of planning in conjunction with your landscape proposals.

Appendices

1. Explanatory Notes and Resources
2. Information on Legislation/Protection

References

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Appendix 1 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 [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 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.

Bat roosting potential is classified according to the following criteria set out below, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2016).

Bat Roosting Suitability of Buildings and Trees

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

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 'Hull Local BAP'.

Priority Species	Priority Habitats
<u>Bee Orchid</u>	<u>Fresh Water Habitats</u>
<u>Brimstone Butterfly</u>	<u>Estuarine Habitats</u>
<u>Common Blue Butterfly</u>	<u>Gardens and Allotments</u>
<u>Common Lizard</u>	<u>Grassland</u>
<u>Common Toad</u>	<u>Industrial Land</u>
<u>Cowslip</u>	<u>Parks, Golf Courses and Cemeteries</u>
<u>Dragonflies</u>	<u>The Built Environment</u>
<u>Elm Trees</u>	<u>Trees, Scrub and Hedgerows</u>
<u>Great Crested Newt</u>	
<u>Harvest Mouse</u>	
<u>Hedgehog</u>	
<u>House Martin</u>	
<u>Lichens</u>	
<u>Linnet</u>	
<u>Mute Swan</u>	
<u>Pipistrelle bats</u>	
<u>Reed Bunting</u>	
<u>Saltmarsh Snails</u>	
<u>Skylark</u>	
<u>Song Thrush</u>	
<u>Spotted Flycatcher</u>	
<u>Tree Sparrow</u>	
<u>Wall Ferns</u>	
<u>Water Vole</u>	
<u>Yellow-wort</u>	

Appendix 2 Wildlife Legislation, Policy and Guidance

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

Legislation

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

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

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

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

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010)

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

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended

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

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)

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

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)

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

Hedgerows Regulations (1997)

Define and provide protection for Important Hedgerows.

Protection of Badgers Act (1992)

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

Protected Sites

Statutory EU / International Protected Sites

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

Statutory UK Protected Sites

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

Locally Protected Sites

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

Protected Species

European Protected Species

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

UK Protected Species

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

Invasive species

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

Planning Policy / Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in July 2018. 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 "*contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment*" and "*help to improve 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 functions for wildlife*" (P118).

Section 15 details conserving and enhancing the natural environment; policies and decisions should be "*protecting and enhancing 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 (P170). Allocations of land for development should, "*prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework and take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats*" (P171).

The Framework sets out ways to minimise the impacts on biodiversity through "*identifying, mapping and safeguarding 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 the "*conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and (the need to) identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity*" (P174).

It is made clear in P175 that local planning authorities should apply principles when determining planning applications. Planning permission should be refused "*if significant harm to biodiversity resulting in 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 incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity*".

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

This strategy 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.