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Ecological Appraisal

Hazelfield Cottage

April 2022

Mr and Mrs Turner



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Summary

OS Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Mr and Mrs Turner in April 2022 to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of land to the rear of Hazelfield Cottage. The site is to be submitted for a retrospective planning application for the construction of holiday accommodation.

| Summary Table | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Habitat Assessment | <p>From a review of aerial imagery and from a botanical survey of the remnant grassland to the east of the site, the field to the north is considered to have supported 'other neutral grassland' which was likely to be of poor condition based on an assessment of the remaining field. At the time of survey the grassland on site had been disturbed and re-seeded with an amenity seed mix, with areas of primarily bare ground remaining.</p> <p>Elsewhere, the site supports an intact hawthorn hedgerow with trees and two short lines of trees to the north and south. Urban habitats on site comprise agricultural buildings, hardstanding, car parking and paths to the holiday lodges.</p> |
| Bats | <p>No roosting opportunities are thought to have been lost through the development. The retained habitats and buildings are not considered to provide suitable roosting opportunities to bats with the exception of the stable building which may provide opportunistic roosting opportunities, although it is not proposed to be impacted.</p> <p>The site is considered to be of low suitability for foraging and commuting bats. The loss of habitats through the development is considered to have had a negligible impact on the value of the site to bats due to the small size and value of the habitats lost.</p> |
| Birds | <p>The site is considered to offer nesting opportunities to the typical assemblage of farmland bird species. The on site nesting opportunities are limited in extent to the line of trees, hedgerow and potentially the stable building on site, although no signs of nesting birds were noted.</p> |
| Amphibians | <p>There are no ponds present within the development boundary, although three waterbodies are present within 500m of the site.</p> <p>The habitats on site are considered to be sub-optimal to support amphibians in their terrestrial phase, with the hedgerow considered to be the habitat of highest value. The development is considered likely to have had a negligible impact on amphibians, should they be present through the loss of a small area of grassland.</p> |
| Other Protected Species | <p>Due to the nature of the site other protected species are considered likely to be absent.</p> <p>The priority species common toad, brown hare and European hedgehog are considered likely to pass through site intermittently, if present in the local area.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Designated Sites</p> | <p>The site falls within the catchment area for the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA, although the holiday lodges were installed prior to the release of guidance on nutrient neutrality. Consultation should be undertaken with the LPA to establish the requirements of the development in relation to nutrient neutrality.</p> |
| <p>Impact Assessment</p> | <p>As a result of the assessment completed and the nature of the works, the likely impacts, without appropriate avoidance measures, mitigation and/or compensation scheme, are considered to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of grassland through the installation of the holiday accommodation, paths, and the expansion of the car park. The grassland lost may have been used on occasion by foraging amphibians, priority species and to a lesser extent foraging bats and birds. |
| <p>Mitigation and Compensation Scheme</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External lighting that may affect the site's suitability for bats will be avoided, and lighting should be avoided close to the hedgerow and line of trees. If required this will be limited to low level, avoiding use of high intensity security lighting. • The change in nutrient deposition as a result of the development may need to be addressed as part of nutrient neutrality. Consultation should be undertaken with the LPA regarding this. • The hawthorn hedgerow should be planted up with native 'woody' species to improve its value. • The grassland should be seeded with a species rich seed mix of local provenance, avoiding the use of a seed mix dominated by perennial rye grass to recreate g3c – other neutral grassland. • The installation of two bat and bird boxes on trees or buildings within the site land holding as a biodiversity enhancement. |

1. Introduction

Site Location

1.1 The site is located to the rear of Hazelfield Cottage and to the north west of Little Stainton, Darlington at an approximate central grid reference of NZ 339 201. The site location is illustrated within figure 1 in the appendices.

Site Description

1.2 The site is approximately 0.3ha in size and at the time of survey comprised of primarily recently sown grassland and hardstanding. A short line of trees, an agricultural shed, holiday accommodation and hedgerow are also present within the development boundary.

1.3 Prior to development the site is thought to support similar habitats to those recorded during the survey with the exception of the holiday accommodation, paths and the recently sown grassland.

Objectives of the Study

1.4 The objectives of this report are:

- To identify and describe any potential ecological receptors that may be present, or which may have been present on site or within an identified zone of influence.
- To identify and assess whether the development may have impacted on the identified receptors.
- To identify potential mitigation, compensation or enhancement measures if required.
- To identify and detail further surveys if required.

Development Proposals

1.5 The site is under a retrospective planning application with the works carried out comprising of the construction of three timber-built structures for the use as holiday accommodation, the installation of a gravel path within the field, the expansion of the car parking area and the disturbance and re-seeding of a proportion of the grassland field.

2. Methodology

Scope of Study

- 2.1 The site was surveyed to identify whether the following were present for legislative and planning purposes:
- Habitats of Conservation Value
 - Priority Habitats
 - Protected and Priority Species
- 2.2 A summary of relevant legislation is provided within Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The ecological characteristics of the site were reviewed to identify the scope of the assessment, with the zone of influence determined through professional judgement.
- 2.4 The survey area comprised the "site" defined within figure 2 (Appendix 4). The desktop study included a data search covering the site and a 2km buffer zone while habitats within the local area were reviewed via aerial imagery.
- 2.5 Access permitting, all potential bat roosting sites within the survey area were assessed. Guidance regarding the assessment of the suitability of sites for use by bats is provided within Appendix 1.

Planning Policy

- 2.6 Planning policy relevant to this site, specifically the National Planning Policy Framework and the Durham Local Plan, can be found within Appendix 2.

Desk Study

- 2.7 Desk study was undertaken to assess the nature of the surrounding habitats and included:
- Assessment of aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping.
 - A search of the MAGIC website¹ for statutorily designated sites for nature conservation, habitat listed within the Priority Habitat Inventory or the Ancient Woodland Inventory and European protected species licensing records within 2km of the survey area.
 - A data search request submitted to the Local Records Centre.

¹ Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (www.magic.gov.uk)

Field Survey

Habitats/Protected Species

2.8 The site was subject to a walk over, during which habitats were assessed in line with the habitat classifications detailed within the UK Habitat Classification User Manual². For plant species, abundance has been recorded using the DAFOR scale as detailed in the following table.

| Abundance | | Percentage Cover |
|------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| D | Dominant | 50-100% |
| A | Abundant | 30-50% |
| F | Frequent | 15-30% |
| O | Occasional | 5-15% |
| R | Rare | <5% |

2.9 Mandatory Secondary Codes within the UK Habitat Classification have been used as defined within the User Manual.

2.10 During the survey the site was checked for evidence of protected species and habitats were assessed for their potential to support such species.

2.11 Survey was undertaken by Zoe Dunnett, an experienced surveyor who holds a protected species licence for great crested newts.

2.12 The following equipment was utilised during survey:

- Binoculars.
- Digital camera.

2.13 The survey was undertaken on the 6th of April 2022 in the following weather conditions:

| Date | Temperature | Cloud Cover | Precipitation | Wind Conditions |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 6/4/2022 | 10°C | 80% | Dry | F4 |

Limitations to Survey

2.14 The survey was undertaken post-development and as such assumptions on the condition of the site prior to the development have been made based on the condition of the adjacent retained habitats and from aerial imagery.

² Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2020). The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 1.1 at <http://www.ukhab.org/>

- 2.15 Survey was undertaken outside the core botanical survey period (April to September) however given the nature of the habitats on site this is not considered to be a significant limitation.

Assessment Methodology

- 2.16 Guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) is utilised to provide habitat valuations.
- 2.17 The level of value of specific ecological receptors is assigned using a geographic frame of reference. For, example international value being most important (SACs, SPAs and pSPAs), then national (SSSIs), regional, county (LWS), district (LNR), local and lastly, within the immediate zone of influence of the site only (low).
- 2.18 In terms of species, for example breeding birds, should the population within the site constitute greater than 1% of the geographic population, it would be considered significant at that level. In addition, presence of designated sites, scarce species and or quality³/diversity of habitats are used to guide that valuation
- 2.19 Assessment methods for bats have been undertaken with reference to Wray et al. (2007)⁴, which correlates with the geographic frame of reference. Within which they define the relative rarity of each species based on the known distribution⁵ at the time and the value of the roost type, assuming that roosts such as feeding perches are of lower value that maternity roosts or sites that have a high level of fidelity.
- 2.20 Examples of ecological receptors at various levels of value are provided within Appendix 3.

³ Quality can be subjective and vary in different geographic areas. Reasoned professional judgement is therefore used to inform the assessment.

⁴ Wray et al (2007) Valuing Bats in Ecological Impact Assessment. In Practice. Based on a presentation at the Mammal Society – Specific Issues with Bats

⁵ It should be noted that there are regular changes to our understanding of distribution as further studies are undertaken.

3. Results

Desk Study

General Land Use

3.1 A review of aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping highlighted that the general land use in the surrounding area is dominated by lowland agriculture, interspersed by blocks of woodland and hedgerow and with occasional hamlets and farm buildings in the wider area.

Designated Sites

3.2 A search of the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Website⁶ indicated that the following designated sites for nature conservation lie within 2km of the site.

| Table 3.1: Designated Sites Within 2km | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|--|
| Designation | Site Name | Reason for Designation | Distance from Survey Area (Closest point) |
| Special Area of Conservation | None within 2km. | | |
| Special Protection Area | None within 2km. | | |
| National Nature Reserve | None within 2km. | | |
| Site of Special Scientific Interest | Newton Ketton Meadow | Newton Ketton Meadow is important as one of the very few surviving unimproved hay meadows in the coastal plain between the Rivers Tyne and Tees. | 1.6km north west |
| SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) The site lies within an identified SSSI Impact Risk Zone relating to designated sites in the wider area, however development of the nature proposed does not meet the identified impact risk triggers. | | | |
| Local Nature Reserve | None within 2km. | | |

Priority Habitats

3.3 A search of the MAGIC website identified areas of habitat within 2km of the site identified within the Priority Habitat Inventory as the following habitat types:

- Lowland meadows
- Deciduous woodland

⁶ Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) www.magic.gov.uk (Accessed April 2022)

3.4 Of the identified areas of habitat, the closest is an area of deciduous woodland which lies 500m south west of the site.

Ancient Woodland

3.5 The MAGIC website did not identify any areas of woodland listed within the Ancient Woodland Inventory within 2km of the site.

European Protected Species Licensing

3.6 The MAGIC website did not identify any granted Natural England European Protected Species licences for within 2km of the site⁷.

Data Search

Local Records Centre

3.7 The following table summarises the data search results from the Environmental Records Information Centre North East. Records were provided for all protected and notable species within 2km of the site, of which key species are listed. The full data search can be provided on request.

| Taxon | Species | No. of Records within Search Area | Records of Particular Note |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Amphibians | No Records. | | |
| Mammals (excluding bats) | Brown Hare | 13 | - |
| | Eurasian Badger | 2 | - |
| | West European Hedgehog | 9 | - |
| Bats | Brown Long-eared Bat | 1 | - |
| | Common Pipistrelle | 4 | - |
| | Noctule Bat | 1 | - |
| Butterflies | Wall | 1 | - |
| Birds (red-listed) | Corn Bunting | 4 | - |
| | Cuckoo | 2 | - |
| | Curlew | 1 | - |
| | European Greater White-fronted Goose | 5 | - |
| | Fieldfare | 3 | - |
| | Greenland Greater White-fronted Goose | 1 | - |
| | Grey Partridge | 1 | - |
| | Grey Wagtail | 2 | - |
| | House Sparrow | 6 | - |

⁷ The dataset is noted as having been last updated in January 2022.

| Table 3.2: Records from LRC Data Search | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Taxon | Species | No. of Records within Search Area | Records of Particular Note |
| | Lapwing | 2 | - |
| | Linnet | 6 | - |
| | Merlin | 1 | - |
| | Mistle Thrush | 1 | - |
| | Pochard | 1 | - |
| | Redwing | 3 | - |
| | Skylark | 6 | - |
| | Song Thrush | 9 | - |
| | Starling | 6 | - |
| | Tree Sparrow | 8 | -- |
| | Whimbrel | 2 | -- |
| | White-fronted Goose | 3 | - |
| | Willow Tit | 1 | - |
| | Woodcock | 1 | - |
| | Yellow Wagtail | 1 | - |
| | Yellowhammer | 8 | - |
| Reptiles | No records. | | |

3.8 The records centre also provided information regarding the following Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) which lie within 2km of the site:

- Carr House Pond LWS

Field Survey




Habitats

Table 3.3: Habitat Descriptions

Overview of habitats

The habitats on site comprise of a recently sown grassland to the north east with gravel paths leading to three timber built dwellings. A line of semi-mature trees comprising of four ash and a single willow tree and a small section of hawthorn hedgerow separate the field from the adjacent buildings and hardstanding to the south west. To the south of the site there is a small area of recently laid amenity grassland and a row of trees including blackthorn, cherry and a single conifer.




The habitats within the site are illustrated within Figure 3.



| Habitat Description | | | Habitat Category |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p><u>Grassland</u> The grassland has been recently sown with an amenity seed mix, across the grassland there is variable coverage of grasses with small areas comprising of primarily bare earth due to the recent disturbance.</p> | | | <p><u>Primary Code</u> g4 – Modified grassland</p> |
| Species/m ² : 1-2. | Sward Height: 0-10cm | Bare ground (%): 30 | <p><u>Secondary Code</u> 73 – Bare ground</p> |
| <p><u>Species List</u> The re-seeded grassland comprises of perennial rye grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) which is the dominant species. There are small areas of grassland within the development boundary which are not considered to have been modified through the development. In these areas the sward height is approximately 5-10cm with occasional creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>) and white clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>) recorded.</p> | | | |
| Schedule 9/Undesirable species present (Y/N): N | | Further Survey Needed (Y/N): n=N | |
|  |  |  | |

Other Habitat

Urban habitats on site comprise agricultural buildings to the north west and the recently installed holiday lodges to the north east.

Primary Code
 u1b – Developed land; sealed surface
 u1b5 – Buildings

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Gravel paths have been installed connecting the holiday accommodation, with the same substrate used for the parking area. A small amount of concrete hardstanding remains in front of the agricultural shed and stables. | | u1c – Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface. |
| | | <u>Secondary Codes</u> n/a |
| Schedule 9/Undesirable species present (Y/N): N | Further Survey Needed (Y/N): N | |
|  |  |  |

| | | | |
|---|-----------|--|--|
| <u>Hedgerow</u> The hedgerow has been recently strimmed and supports ground flora comprising of perennial rye grass with cleavers (<i>Gallium aparine</i>) and cow parsley (<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>). There is a single immature ash and semi-mature willow within the hedgerow with additional trees within the same hedgerow outside the site boundary. | | | <u>Primary Code</u> h2a – Hedgerow (priority) |
| Height: 2m | Width: 1m | Intact (Y/N): Y | <u>Secondary Code</u> 190 – With trees |
| Species Rich (Y/N): N | | Managed (Y/N): Y | |
| <u>Species List</u> The hedgerow comprises of hawthorn (<i>Crataegus</i> sp.) with occasional bramble (<i>Rubus</i> sp.) at the base. | | | |
| Schedule 9/Undesirable species present (Y/N): N | | Further Survey Needed (Y/N): N | |
|  | |  | |

Protected Species

Bats

- 3.9 The trees on site are considered to be too young in age to provide features suitable for roosting bats and from a ground-based assessment none of the trees on site were noted to contain roosting features and no work impacting the trees is proposed or has been undertaken. The occasional roosting opportunity may be available associated with the timber stable on site, although no works impacting this structure are proposed. The agricultural shed and recently installed holiday lodges are considered to be of negligible suitability.
- 3.10 The site offers foraging opportunities limited to the line of trees, hedgerow and to a lesser extent the grassland. The hedgerow and line of trees may also offer commuting opportunities to bats, although are somewhat limited in their connectivity to the wider area due to the absence of field margins or hedgerow, from a review of aerial imagery.

Birds

- 3.11 The site is considered to offer nesting opportunities to the typical assemblage of farmland bird species. The onsite nesting opportunities are limited in extent to the line of trees, hedgerow and potentially the stable building on site, although no signs of nesting birds were noted.
- 3.12 Skylark, a red-listed species on the Birds of Conservation Concern list⁸ was heard calling in the field adjacent to the site.

Amphibians

- 3.13 There are no ponds on site and from a review of aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping there two ponds located 200m north west and 200m west and a drain 350m south of the site.
- 3.14 The on-site habitats are considered to be sub-optimal to support amphibians, if present in the local area. The hedgerow may support low numbers of amphibians during their terrestrial phase, although it is limited by its connectivity to the surrounding ponds. The grassland offers limited foraging habitat, due to the short sward height and low species diversity.

Other protected species

- 3.15 Due to the nature of the site, other protected species are considered likely to be absent.

⁸ Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D. and Win, I. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain.

3.16 The priority species common toad, brown hare and European hedgehog are considered likely to pass through site intermittently, if present in the local area.

4. Site Assessment

Assessment of Survey Findings

Habitats

- 4.1 From a review of aerial imagery and from a botanical survey of the remnant grassland to the east of the site, the field to the north is considered to have supported a g3c – other neutral grassland which was likely to be of poor condition based on an assessment of the remaining field, outside the site boundary. Historic aerial imagery suggests this field was sheep grazed previously. At the time of survey the grassland on site had been disturbed and re-seeded with an amenity seed mix, with areas of primarily bare ground remaining.
- 4.2 The line of trees and hedgerow on site are considered to be of the highest ecological value and were not thought to be impacted upon through the development.
- 4.3 The hardstanding and gravel areas are of low ecological value.

Bats

- 4.4 No roosting opportunities are thought to have been lost through the development. The retained habitats and buildings are not considered to provide suitable roosting opportunities to bats with the exception of the stable building which may provide opportunistic roosting opportunities, although it is not proposed to be impacted.
- 4.5 The site is considered to be of low suitability for foraging and commuting bats. It is anticipated that the level of activity on site would comprise occasional passes of pipistrelles associated with the hedgerow and line of trees. The loss of habitats through the development is considered to have had a negligible impact on the value of the site to bats due to the small size and value of the habitats lost.

Birds

- 4.6 The site provides limited nesting opportunities to the local assemblage of birds associated with the line of trees and hedgerow on site. The stable building may also offer nesting opportunities to species such as swallows.
- 4.7 No opportunities for nesting birds are considered to have been lost through the development.

Amphibians

- 4.8 There are no ponds present within the development boundary, although three waterbodies are present within 500m of the site. If these waterbodies support amphibians there is potential this taxon may be on site. A lack of amphibian records in the local area and the severance of the site from the ponds to the west reduces the likelihood of amphibians using the site, however.

- 4.9 The habitats on site are considered to be sub-optimal to support amphibians in their terrestrial phase, with the hedgerow considered to be the habitat of highest value. The development is considered likely to have had a negligible impact on amphibians, should they be present through the loss of a small area of grassland.

Other Protected Species

- 4.10 Due to the nature of the site other protected species are considered likely to be absent.
- 4.11 The priority species common toad, brown hare and European hedgehog are considered likely to pass through site intermittently, if present in the local area.

Designated Sites

- 4.12 The site falls within the catchment area for the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA, although the holiday lodges were installed prior to the release of guidance on nutrient neutrality. Consultation should be undertaken with the LPA to establish the requirements of the development in relation to nutrient neutrality.

5. Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The following impact assessment is based on the survey work to date and with assumptions made on the condition of the site prior to the installation of the holiday lodges and development of the parking area based on aerial imagery and assessment of the adjacent habitats.
- 5.2 As a result of the assessment completed and the nature of the works, the impacts are considered to be:
- Loss of grassland through the installation of the holiday accommodation, paths, and the expansion of the car park. The grassland lost may have been used on occasion by foraging amphibians, priority species and to a lesser extent foraging bats and birds.
 - Potential minimal increase in nutrient deposition as a result of increased sewage waste produced from the holiday accommodation.
- 5.3 Due to the small footprint of the development and the loss of grassland which is widely replicated in the local area and not considered to be ecologically significant the overall impacts of the development are considered to be minimal.

6. Mitigation and Compensation Scheme

Mitigation Strategy

6.1 The following is recommended:

- External lighting that may affect the site's suitability for bats will be avoided, and lighting should be avoided close to the hedgerow and line of trees. If required this will be limited to low level, avoiding use of high intensity security lighting.
- The change in nutrient deposition as a result of the development may need to be addressed as part of nutrient neutrality. Consultation should be undertaken with the LPA regarding this.

Compensation Scheme

6.2 The following is recommended:

- The hawthorn hedgerow should be planted up with native woody species to improve its value.
- The grassland should be seeded with a species rich seed mix of local provenance, avoiding the use of a seed mix dominated by perennial rye grass to achieve g3c – other neutral grassland.
- The installation of two bat and bird boxes on trees or buildings within the site land holding as a biodiversity enhancement.

Appendix 1 – Bat Suitability and Survey Effort

Classifications of suitability are based on those provided within the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Survey Guidelines⁹, with the table below taken from page 35 of the guidelines (table 4.1).

| Guidelines for Assessing the Potential Suitability of Proposed Development Sites for Bats (based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement) | | |
|---|--|---|
| Suitability | Description | |
| | Roosting Habitats | Commuting and foraging habitats |
| Negligible | Negligible habitat features on site, likely to be used by roosting bats | Negligible habitat features on site, likely to be used by commuting and foraging bats |
| Low | <p>A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically.</p> <p>However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions^a and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation^b).</p> <p>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^c.</p> | <p>Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat.</p> <p>Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.</p> |
| Moderate | A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^a 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). | <p>Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens.</p> <p>Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.</p> |
| 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, protection, conditions ^a and surrounding habitat | <p>Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge.</p> <p>High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree lined watercourse and grazed parkland.</p> <p>Site is close to and connected to known roosts.</p> |
| <p><i>a. For example in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.</i></p> <p><i>b. Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten et al., 2015). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK but ecologists should be aware of potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in larger buildings in highly urbanised environments.</i></p> <p><i>c. The system of categorisation aligns with BS 8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015)</i></p> | | |

⁹ Collins, J. (ed) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). Bat Conservation Trust

The classification of the suitability relates to the level of further survey recommended.

| Survey Effort and Timing Depending on Suitability of the Structure or Tree (Tables 7.1-7.3 in the BCT Guidelines) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low roost suitability | Moderate suitability | High roost suitability |
| Survey Effort | One survey visit One dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey | Two separate visits One dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey | Three separate visits At least one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. The third can be either dusk or dawn. |
| Timings | May-August (structures) No further survey (trees) | May to September. At least one must be in the optimum period (May to August) | May to September. two must be in the optimum period (May to August) |
| If bats are recorded | If bats emerge from or enter a building during surveys, the survey schedule will be adjusted to increase the survey effort so that enough information can be collected to characterise the roost and provide data should a Natural England Licence be required. | | |

Appendix 2 – Policy and Legislation

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁰

The revised National Planning Policy Framework sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan. The key paragraphs from the relating to the natural environment are detailed below.

| Ecologically Relevant Paragraphs of the NPPF | |
|---|--|
| Paragraph | Statement |
| 8 | <p>Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure; b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy |
| 174 | <p>Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate; d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; |

¹⁰ National Planning Policy Framework July 2021
(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf)

| Ecologically Relevant Paragraphs of the NPPF | |
|---|--|
| Paragraph | Statement |
| | <p>e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and</p> <p>f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate</p> |
| 175 | <p>Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries</p> |
| 179 | <p>To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:</p> <p>a) 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; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and</p> <p>b) 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.</p> |
| 180 | <p>When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:</p> <p>a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;</p> <p>b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;</p> <p>c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons⁶³ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and</p> <p>d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while 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 or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.</p> |
| 181 | <p>The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:</p> <p>a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;</p> <p>b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites⁶⁴; and</p> <p>c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites</p> |

| Ecologically Relevant Paragraphs of the NPPF | |
|---|--|
| Paragraph | Statement |
| 182 | The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site. |

Local Planning Policy

The following table details the ecologically relevant policies of the local plan relevant to this site.

| Ecologically Relevant Policies of the County Durham Plan¹¹ | |
|--|---|
| Policy No. | Policy |
| Policy 40 | <p>Trees, Woodlands and Hedges</p> <p>Proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of, or damage to, trees of high landscape, amenity or biodiversity value unless the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm. Where development would involve the loss of ancient or veteran trees it will be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.</p> <p>Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing trees where they can make a positive contribution to the locality or to the development, maintain adequate stand-off distances between them and new land-uses, including root protection areas where necessary, to avoid future conflicts, and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their future management requirements and growth potential.</p> <p>Where trees are lost, suitable replacement planting, including appropriate provision for maintenance and management, will be required within the site or the locality.</p> <p>Where applications are made to carry out works to trees in Conservation Areas or that are covered by a Tree Preservation Order, they will be determined in accordance with the council's Tree Management Policy Document (or any subsequent revisions).</p> <p>Proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of, or damage to, woodland unless the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the impact and suitable replacement woodland planting, either within or beyond the site boundary, can be undertaken.</p> <p>Proposals for new development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodlands as shown on the policies map, will be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. Proposals affecting ancient woodland (including planted ancient woodland sites) not previously identified as such, will be subject to the same considerations.</p> <p>Proposals for new development will be expected to maintain adequate stand-off distances between woodland and new land-uses to avoid future conflicts, and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their future management requirements and growth potential.</p> <p>Proposals for new development will not be permitted that would result in the loss of hedges of high landscape, heritage, amenity or biodiversity value unless the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm.</p> |

¹¹ County Durham Plan, Adopted 2020, Durham County Council

| Ecologically Relevant Policies of the County Durham Plan¹¹ | |
|--|---|
| Policy No. | Policy |
| | <p>Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing hedgerows where appropriate and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their management requirements.</p> <p>Where any hedges are lost, suitable replacement planting or restoration of existing hedges, will be required within the site or the locality, including appropriate provision for maintenance and management.</p> |
| Policy 41 | <p>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</p> <p>Proposals for new development will not be permitted if significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity resulting from the development cannot be avoided, or appropriately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.</p> <p>Proposals for new development will be expected to minimise impacts on biodiversity by retaining and enhancing existing biodiversity assets and features and providing net gains for biodiversity including by establishing coherent ecological networks(152) . Measures should be appropriate, consistent with the biodiversity of the site and contribute to the resilience and coherence of local ecological networks.</p> <p>Proposals for new development will be expected to protect geological features and have regard to Geodiversity Action Plans, the Durham Geodiversity Audit and where appropriate promote public access, appreciation and interpretation of geodiversity.</p> <p>Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geodiversity will be permitted, where they accord with other relevant policies in the Plan.</p> <p>Development proposals which are likely to result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitat(s) (such as peatlands or lowland fen) will not be permitted unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.</p> |
| Policy 42 | <p>Internationally Designated Sites</p> <p>Development that has the potential to have an effect on internationally designated site(s), (including all development within 0.4 kilometres of the sites, as shown on Map B of the policies map document), either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will need to be screened in the first instance to determine whether significant effects on the site are likely and, if so, will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Development will be refused where it cannot be ascertained, following Appropriate Assessment, that there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of the site, unless the proposal is able to pass the further statutory tests of 'no alternatives' and 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' as set out in Regulation 64 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In these exceptional circumstances, where these tests are met, appropriate compensation will be required in accordance with Regulation 68.</p> <p>Where development proposals would be likely to lead to an increase in recreational pressure upon internationally designated sites, a Habitats Regulations screening assessment and, where necessary, a full Appropriate Assessment will need to be undertaken to demonstrate that a proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. In determining whether a plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of a site, the implementation of identified strategic measures to counteract effects, can be considered during the Appropriate Assessment.</p> <p>Land identified and/or managed as part of any mitigation or compensation measures should be maintained in perpetuity. Development proposals which have an adverse impact on mitigation or compensation measures will not be allowed.</p> |
| Policy 43 | Protected Species and Nationally and Locally Protected Sites |

| Ecologically Relevant Policies of the County Durham Plan¹¹ | |
|--|---|
| Policy No. | Policy |
| | <p>All development proposals in, or which are likely to adversely impact upon (either individually or in combination with other developments), any of the following national designations (where not a component of an internationally designated site):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites of Special Scientific Interest • National Nature Reserves <p>will only be permitted where the benefits of development in that location clearly outweigh the impacts on the interest features on the site and any wider impacts on the network of sites.</p> <p>All development proposals in, or which are likely to adversely impact upon, any of the following local designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Sites (Geology and Wildlife) • Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) <p>will only be permitted when it can be demonstrated that the benefits of development in that location outweigh the impacts on the local nature conservation interest or scientific interest on the site and any wider impacts on the network of sites.</p> <p>In all cases where development impacts adversely on a designated site, mitigation, or as a last resort compensation, must be provided and it must be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation or compensatory measures are appropriate to the designations assigned to the site and deliver clear net gains for the habitats and/or species assemblages the site is designated for.</p> <p>In relation to protected species and their habitats, all development which, alone or in combination, has a likely adverse impact on the ability of species to survive, reproduce and maintain or expand their current distribution will not be permitted unless:</p> <p>a. appropriate mitigation, or as a last resort compensation, can be provided, which maintains a viable population and where possible provides opportunities for the population to expand; and</p> <p>b. where the species is a European protected species, the proposal also meets the licensing criteria (the 3 legal tests) of overriding public interest, no satisfactory alternative and favourable conservation status.</p> |

Government Circular ODPM 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation¹² (England only)

This Circular provides administrative guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation as it applies in England.

Part IV - Conservation of Species protected by Law details that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when considering a development proposal that may result in harm to the species or its habitat and that planning authorities must have regard to species protected under the Habitat Regulations.

It goes on to say that: *it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the*

¹²ODPM Circular 06/2005 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU
Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System

decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006^{13 14}

Section 40 – To conserve biodiversity

This section puts a duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity when undertaking its duties and functions.

Section 41 – Biodiversity list and Action

Requires the Secretary of State to *publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. They must also take such steps as appear to the Secretary of State to be reasonably practicable to further the conservation of the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section or promote the taking by others of such steps.*

The 2007 lists were superseded by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

| UK Priority Habitats (excl. marine habitats)¹⁵ | |
|--|---|
| UK BAP Broad Habitat | UK BAP Priority Habitat |
| Rivers and Streams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers |
| Standing Open Waters and Canals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oligotrophic and Dystrophic Lakes • Eutrophic Standing Waters • Ponds • Aquifer Fed Naturally Fluctuating Water Bodies • Mesotrophic Lakes |
| Arable and Horticultural | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arable Field Margins |
| Boundary and Linear Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedgerows |
| Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Orchards • Upland Mixed Ashwoods • Wood-Pasture and Parkland • Wet Woodland • Upland Oakwood • Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland • Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland • Upland Birchwoods |
| Coniferous Woodland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Pine Woodlands |
| Acid Grassland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowland Dry Acid Grassland |
| Calcareous Grassland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowland Calcareous Grassland • Upland Calcareous Grassland |
| Neutral Grassland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowland Meadows • Upland Hay Meadows |

¹³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/40>

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/41>

¹⁵ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5706>

| UK Priority Habitats (excl. marine habitats)¹⁵ | |
|--|---|
| UK BAP Broad Habitat | UK BAP Priority Habitat |
| Improved Grassland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh |
| Dwarf Shrub Heath | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland Heathland Upland Heathland |
| Fen, Marsh and Swamp | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures Lowland Fens Reedbeds |
| Bogs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland Raised Bog Blanket Bog |
| Montane Habitats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain Heaths and Willow Scrub |
| Inland Rock | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inland Rock Outcrop and Scree Habitats Calaminarian Grasslands Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land Limestone Pavements |
| Supralittoral Rock | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime Cliff and Slopes |
| Supralittoral Sediment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Vegetated Shingle Machair Coastal Sand Dunes |

Protected Species Legislation

European Protected Species

European Protected Species (EPS) are species of plants and animals (other than birds) protected by law throughout the European Union. They are listed in Annexes II and IV of the European Habitats Directive and receive full protection under The Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). This make it an offence to:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill any European Protected Species (EPS)
- deliberately disturb any European Protected Species (EPS);
- damage or destroy a breeding site or place of rest or shelter used by any European Protected Species (EPS).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) adds further protection by making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly¹⁶ disturb an EPS while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to any structure or place the species uses for shelter or protection.

| European Protected Species Relevant to the UK | | | |
|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Animals | | Plants | |
| All bat species | Great Crested Newt | Yellow saxifrage | marsh Creeping marshwort |

¹⁶ Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) extended the protection to cover reckless damage or disturbance

| European Protected Species Relevant to the UK | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Animals | | Plants | |
| Large blue butterfly | Otter | Shore dock | Slender naiad |
| Wild cat | Smooth snake | Killarney fern | Fen Orchid |
| Dolphins, porpoises and whales (all species) | Sturgeon fish | Early gentian | Floating-leaved water plantain |
| Dormouse | Natterjack toad | Lady's slipper | |
| Sand lizard | Pool Frog | | |
| Fisher's Estuarine Moth | Snail, Lesser Whirlpool Ram's-horn | | |
| Marine turtles | | | |

Other Protected Species

| Other Protected Species Legislation | | |
|--|--|--|
| Species | Legislation | Level of Protection |
| Birds | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) | <p>Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) it is an offence if any person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> intentionally kills, injures or takes any wild bird intentionally takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird whilst that nest is in use or being built; intentionally takes, damages or destroys eggs of any wild bird; <p>Wild birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are protected from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> intentional or reckless disturbance whilst it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; disturbance of dependent young |
| Slow-worm Adder Grass Snake Common Lizard | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) | <p>Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) it is an offence if any person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> intentionally kill or injures these slow-worms, adders, grass snakes or common lizards sells, offers or exposes for sale, or has in his possession or transports for the purpose of sale, any live or dead slow-worm, adder, grass snake or common lizard or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal |

Appendix 3 - Receptor Valuation

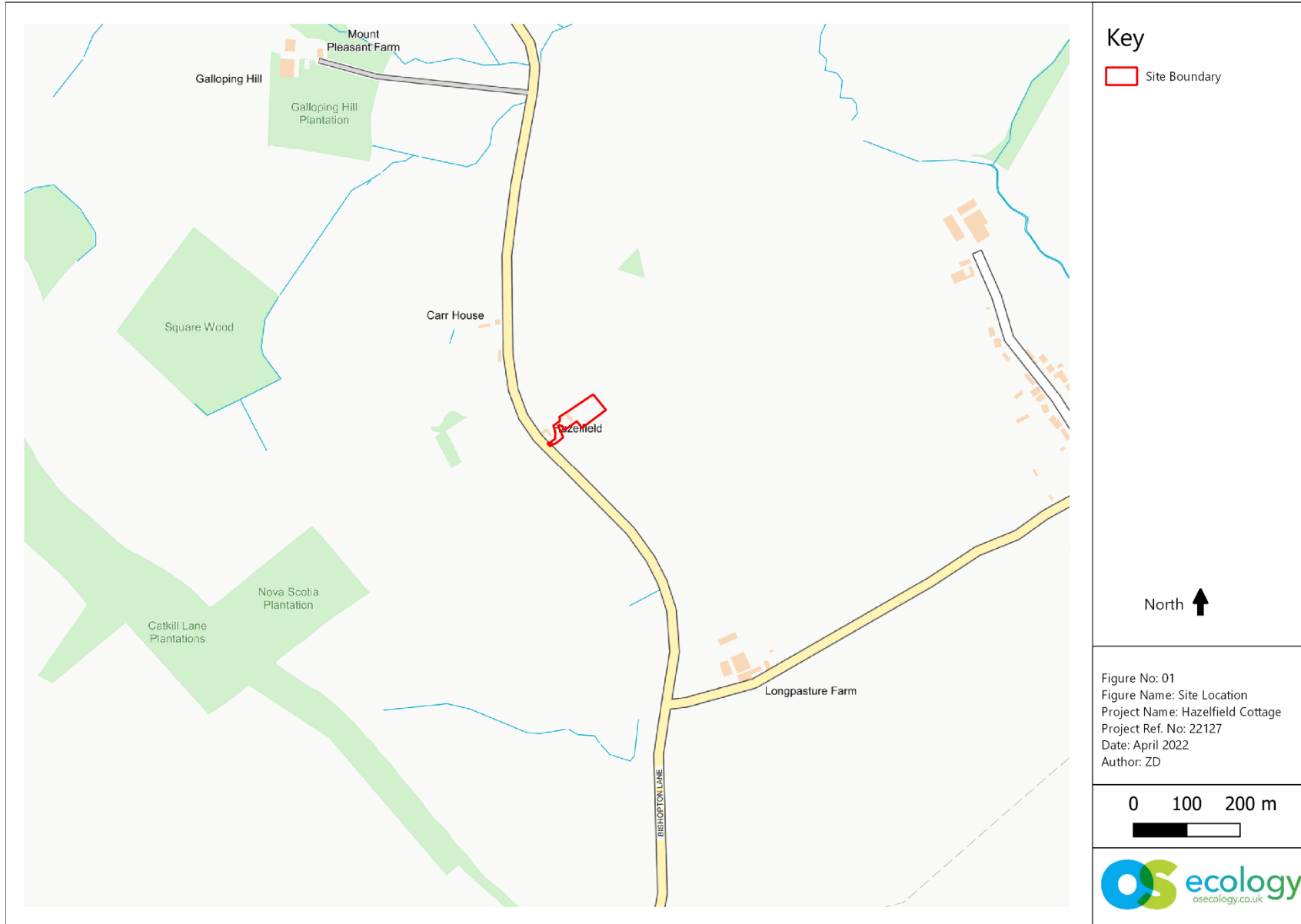
The importance of ecological features is considered within a defined geographic context, examples of which are provided within the table below. The valuation of features is a complex process and, in many cases, requires the application of expert judgement. Valuation considers a range of factors including statutory designations, national biodiversity lists, biodiversity action plan lists and lists of declining, rare or legally protected species. Other factors to be considered include the 'naturalness' of habitats, the functional importance of features and whether habitats are irreplaceable.

| Examples of Importance of Ecological Features (Geographic Context)¹⁷ | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Importance | Designated Site | Habitat | Species |
| International and European | Special Protection Area/Proposed Special Protection Area Special Area of Conservation/Proposed Special Area of Conservation Ramsar Site | A significant area of a Priority Habitat listed on Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive or a smaller area of such habitat that is thought to be functionally linked to a significant area of such habitat | An area that is functionally important to a species listed on Annexes II, IV or V of the Habitats Directive or Annex I of the Birds Directive which is present in internationally significant numbers (> 1% of the biogeographic population) |
| National | Site of Special Scientific Interest | A significant area of a Priority Habitat listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 or a smaller area of such habitat that is thought to be functionally linked to a significant area of such habitat | An area that is functionally important to a species listed as a species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, which is present in nationally significant numbers (> 1% of the national population) |
| Regional | - | An area of a Priority Habitat listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which is not significant enough in extent to be considered of national importance but is considered to be of greater than metropolitan or county value. | An area that is functionally important to a species which is present in regionally significant numbers (> 1% of the regional population) |
| Metropolitan area or County | Local Wildlife Site designated at a metropolitan area or county level | A significant area of a Priority Habitat listed within the relevant local Biodiversity Action Plan or a smaller area | An area that is functionally important to a species listed as a Priority Species within the relevant local Biodiversity |

¹⁷ Based on information provided within Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (2018) CIEEM

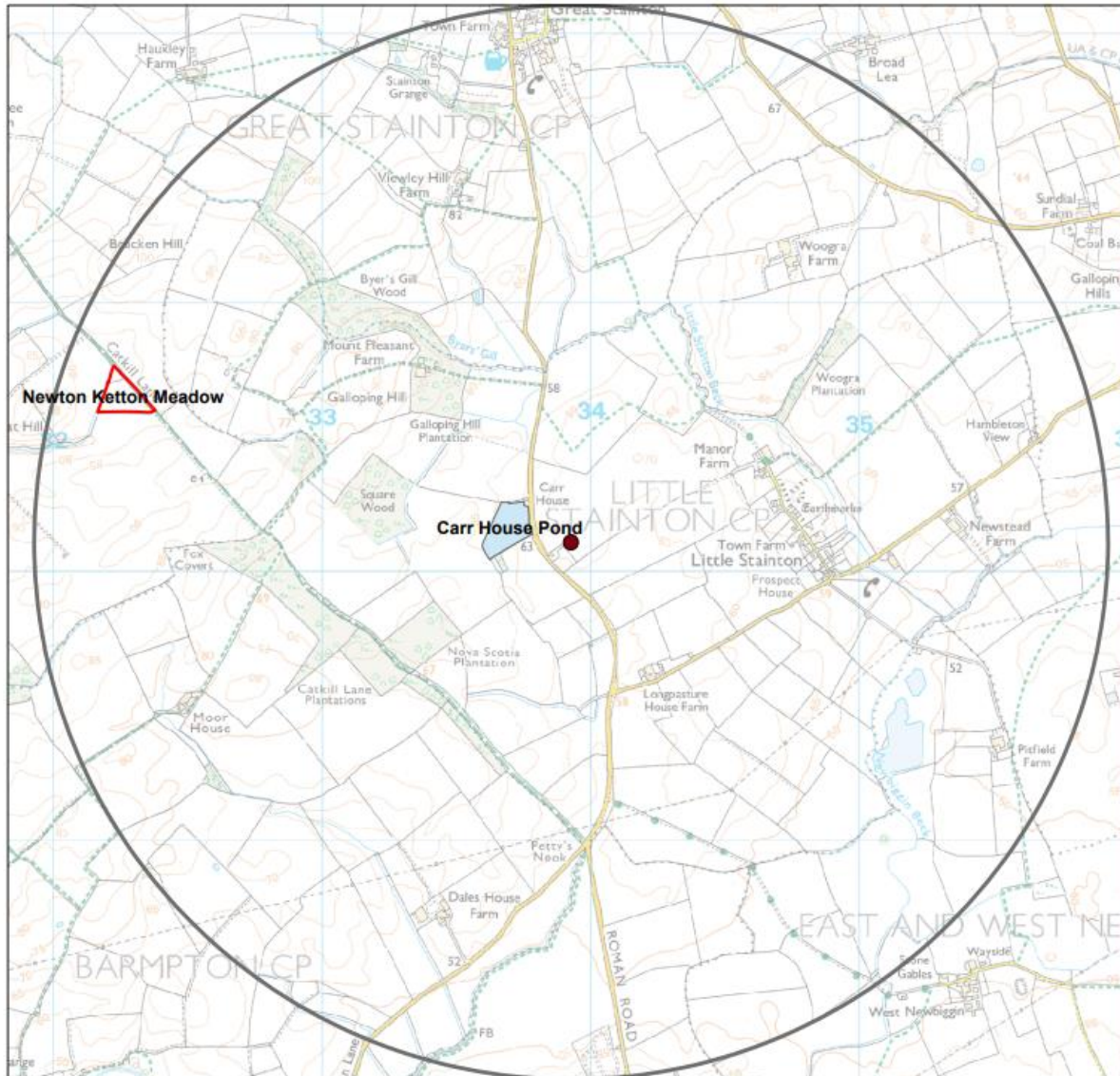
| Examples of Importance of Ecological Features (Geographic Context)¹⁷ | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Importance | Designated Site | Habitat | Species |
| Local (District/ Borough of Parish) | Local Wildlife Site designated at a district or borough level | of such habitat that is thought to be functionally linked to a significant area of such habitat | Action Plan, which is present in significant numbers within the geographic context. |
| Low | - | Habitats that are unexceptional in a local context and do not meet the above criteria. | Species populations that are unexceptional in a local context and do not meet the above criteria. |

Appendix 4 – Figures









**ECOLOGICAL DATA SEARCH -
STATUTORY & NON STATUTORY SITES**

HAZELFIELD COTTAGE

OS ECOLOGY

PLOT PRODUCED: 25 April 2022

- NZ3392920107
- 2000m Search Area
- SSSI
- Darlington Local Wildlife Sites

Produced by



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