



ENHANCING LOCAL NATURE. ENABLING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



CROOKHAM CHURCH, NORTHUMBERLAND

05 October 2022

DOCUMENT CONTROL:

PROJECT INFORMATION

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|--------------|--|
| Client | <i>Mr and Mrs Pickering</i> |
| Report Title | <i>Ecological Impact Assessment</i> |
| Project Site | <i>Crookham Church, Crookham, Northumberland (OS central grid ref. NT 91622 38201)</i> |
| Project Ref. | <i>CE2022P0016</i> |
| Version | <i>DRAFT</i> |
| Report Date | <i>05/10/2022</i> |
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1 SUMMARY

1.1 Report Purpose

- 1.1.1 Following an assessment of the ecological interest of the site, this report highlights any ecological constraints and opportunities connected to the proposed scheme, that will need to be taken into account during different phases of proposed works.

1.2 Proposed Scheme

- 1.2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of Crookham United Reformed Church located in Crookham, Northumberland ('the Site') to a single dwelling. Development will be contained within the Site footprint and the existing public drainage system will be used.

1.3 Survey Methods

- 1.3.1 This assessment follows the accepted guidelines¹ and is proportionate to the site and proposed development scheme. The assessment considers the baseline ecological conditions and context of the Site and incorporates a desk survey, and subsequent site surveys, including nocturnal bat activity surveys, with consideration of designated nature conservation sites, habitats and protected species, in particular roosting bats and nesting birds.

1.4 Impacts & Recommendations

- 1.4.1 Having reviewed the ecological conditions and context of the site, in consideration of the nature and location of the proposed scheme, no impacts are predicted on designated sites or impact risk zones for designated sites that require mitigation.
- 1.4.2 Habitats on the Site itself are limited to ornamental shrubs within the small garden areas to the south, east and west of the Site. No impacts on habitats of conservation importance are anticipated.
- 1.4.3 Following preliminary assessment of the structures on Site and adjacent habitats, three nocturnal bat activity surveys were undertaken, revealing ten summer day roosts each of a single bat of widespread and abundant species. Breeding birds were also observed on Site and its adjacent habitat. The Site is considered unsuitable for other protected or notable species, other than foraging hedgehogs, and no evidence of other protected species was found on site.

1.5 Conclusions

- 1.5.1 In regards to the bat roosts on Site, a European Protected Species mitigation licence will be required from Natural England. Mitigation will be required for breeding birds in the event that works take place within the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive).

¹ CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Site Location

2.1.1 Cheviot Ecology was commissioned by Edwin Thompson LLP on behalf of Mr and Mrs Pickering, ('the Client') to undertake an ecological assessment of the Site, which comprises the stone built former United Reformed church at Crookham, Northumberland, (Ordnance Survey central grid reference NT 91622 38201). An aerial image of the Site with red-line boundary is shown in Figure 1, below.

2.2 Site Description

2.2.1 The Site is located in Crookham, Northumberland. It is situated approximately 17km west of the North Sea coast at the closest point of measurement. The River Till flows 280m to the north east of the Site and a tributary stream of the Till, the Pallin's Burn, flows 230m to the south of the Site.

2.2.2 Surrounding habitat in the wider landscape within the 2km search area (see paragraph 3.1.3) is mainly arable farmland with scattered areas of mixed woodland shelterbelt, as well as individual deciduous trees and, along the banks of the River Till, some riparian woodland. There are some areas of grazing pasture. (See Figure 2, below).

2.2.3 The Site comprises a stone-built church with pitched slate roof. It is located within the hamlet of Crookham along the B6353 and close to the A697 trunk road 190m to the south west. There are a number of residential dwellings within Crookham, most with gardens featuring a mix of herbaceous plants and shrubs. There is an area of 0.64ha of mixed woodland to the immediate south of the Site.

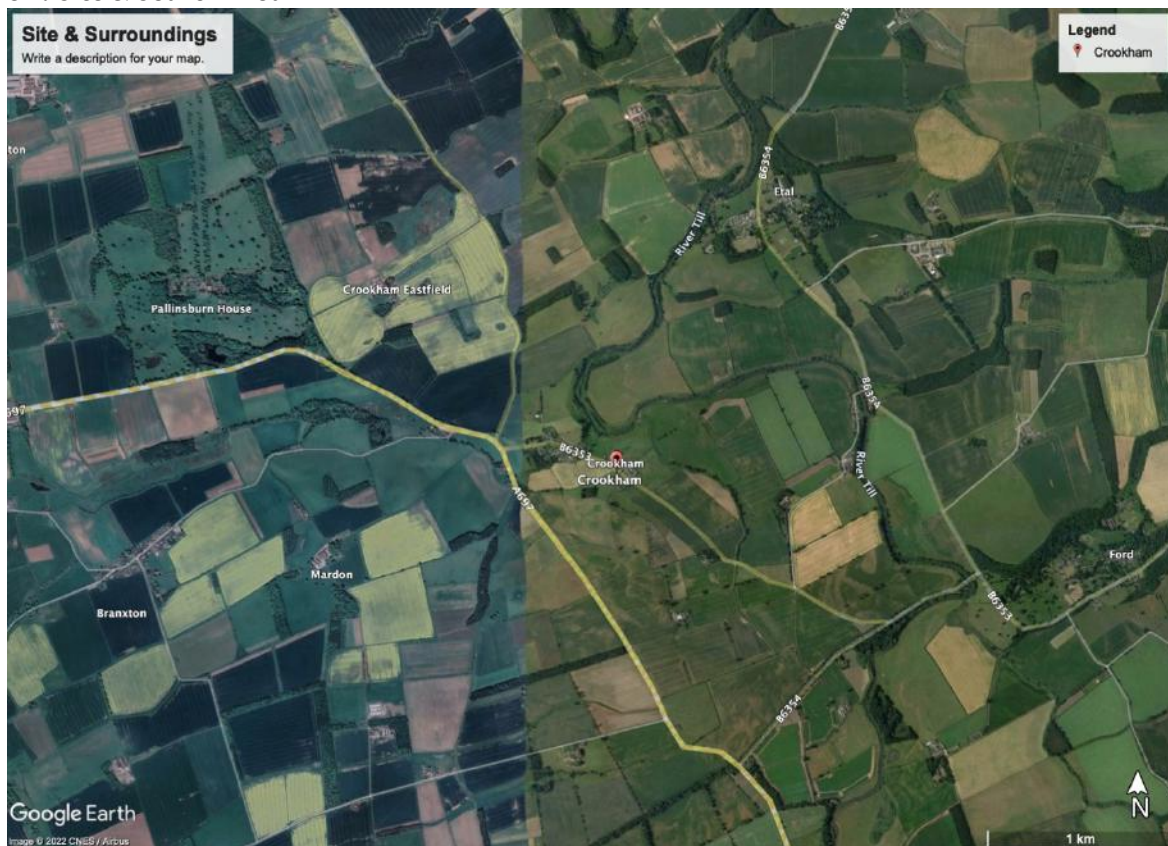
2.3 Personnel

2.3.1 The assessment has been undertaken by Elizabeth Walker MSc MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist with 11 years' experience in ecology, conservation and environmental management. Elizabeth is a full member of CIEEM and holds a Class 2 survey licence for bats with Natural England (licence number 2017-32165-CLS-CLS) and a Class 1 survey licence for great crested newt (Natural England licence number 2021-54671-CLS-CLS).

Figure 1: The Site



Figure 2: Site & Search Area



2.4 Proposed Scheme

2.4.1 Planning permission is to be sought for the conversion of the Site to a single residential dwelling of five bedrooms, with associated landscaping. The proposed drainage connection is to the existing mains system.

2.5 Report Purpose

2.5.1 This report has been written in accordance with CIEEM (2018) guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and aims to:

- Identify potential development impacts and their effect on protected species, habitats and designated sites, and describe any potentially significant ecological effects associated with the proposed scheme, if applicable;
- Outline mitigation measures, where necessary, to address any such effects and ensure compliance with relevant legislation;
- Identify proportionate enhancement measures where there are opportunities to achieve a net gain in biodiversity, in accordance with local and national policies;
- Assess the significance of any residual effects.

2.5.2 All relevant legislation and policies are presented in Appendix 7.5.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope

- 3.1.1 In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 193 and accepted standards for biodiversity², the principle of proportionality has been considered in undertaking the assessment, given the nature, context and scale of the proposed development.
- 3.1.2 CIEEM (2018) guidelines for EclA, state that for straightforward projects, where no further ecological surveys are needed, an EclA Report can be produced following completion of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which comprises a desk study and a walkover survey to assess the ecological features present, or potentially present, within the zone of influence of the proposed scheme.
- 3.1.3 Adopting a proportional approach in accordance with CIEEM guidance³, a 2km precautionary zone of influence has been selected as the area of study, based on the nature of the site and proposed scheme.
- 3.1.4 This assessment defines potential ecological receptors as designated nature conservation sites, habitats, species and any ecological communities occurring within the zone of influence of the proposed scheme. This includes habitats and species of principal importance (HSI/SPI) for the conservation of biodiversity in England (as per Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006) and local biodiversity action plan (LBAP) species of conservation importance at County level. In addition, they are those receptors which have been identified by Northumberland County Council (NCC), the Local Planning Authority (LPA), as outlined in Note 15 and Appendix A of the Planning Validation Checklist.

3.2 Desk Study

- 3.2.1 An online desk study has been undertaken using tools within Defra's Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside internet-based database (MAGIC)⁴. This has enabled identification of the location and characteristics of any statutory and non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest within 2km of the Site boundaries. Impact Risk Zones for statutory designated sites have also been considered. A check of the MAGIC tool was also undertaken for European Protected Species Mitigation Licences issued within the study area for bats. The Northumberland County Council Planning Constraints map was also consulted.⁵
- 3.2.2 A data request for details of any protected and notable species, statutory and non-statutory designated sites within the 2km search area was submitted to the Environmental Records and Information Centre (ERIC) North East and data was provided on 08 September 2022.

² British Standards Institution (2013) *Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013)*, BSI, London.

³ CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Technical Guidance Series. Second Edition.* Published December 2017.

⁴ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>, accessed 20 August 2021.

⁵ Available at: <https://northumberland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6e3fb0b723f6468aa427e430333320aa>

3.2.3 The Site and its surroundings were examined using OS maps, aerial imagery provided by Google Earth Pro (accessed 02 August 2022), and Natural England's open data Priority Habitat Inventory for North England to enable understanding of the Site context and surrounding habitats. Consideration was given to potential habitat linkages with other sites and habitats of ecological importance within the local area, that may also provide corridors to the Site for species of conservation importance.

3.3 Walkover Survey

3.3.1 A walkover survey of the Site was undertaken on 09 June 2022 by Elizabeth Walker MSc MCIEEM. The Site was assessed in terms of its potential biodiversity value, including for protected species and other species of conservation importance. Particular focus was given to roosting bats and breeding birds.

3.3.2 A standard approach⁶ is normally used to identify any habitats present on Site and map their spatial extent. The footprint of this Site however is limited to a stone building within a garden featuring mainly ornamental shrubs and therefore no habitat mapping has been undertaken. A plant species list has been produced.

3.3.3 The walkover survey included checks for signs of protected and notable species within the Site and an assessment of its potential to support Species of Principal Importance (SPI), or other legally protected and notable species.

3.3.4 A check for invasive plant species was also undertaken.

3.4 Assessment for Protected & Notable Species

3.4.1 The Site assessment for notable and protected species considers the potential of features within the Site to be used for breeding, foraging and/or create links to suitable habitats within the wider landscape for the following species:

Bats

3.4.2 Best practice guidelines⁷ for bat Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) require consideration of structures, trees and buildings that may be impacted by the proposed scheme and their suitability for roosting bats. Suitability is categorised as low, moderate or high, depending on the habitat features present and the likelihood of their use by roosting, commuting or foraging bats.

3.4.3 An assessment of the site and surrounding habitat within 50m of the site, as well as the broader landscape context, was considered. Consideration was given to potential foraging and commuting habitat on and immediately adjacent to Site, and its connectivity of to the wider environment.

3.4.4 Characteristic indications of suitable roost sites and habitat locations are shown in Table 1, below.⁸

⁶ JNCC, (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a Technique for Environmental Audit, ISBN 0 86139 6367

⁷ Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

⁸ Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn.). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-96-1

3.4.5 Equipment used for the PRA included high-powered binoculars, (where access to high points of the building was not possible using ladders, for safety reasons, or due to the nature of the structure itself), endoscope and high-powered torches. Ladders were used to access upper sections of buildings and potential roost features that could not be accessed from ground level.

Table 1: Assessing the suitability of proposed development sites for bats

| SUITABILITY | ROOSTING HABITATS | COMMUTING/FORAGING HABITAT |
|-------------|---|--|
| Negligible | Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats | Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats |
| Low | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. Such potential roost sites do not provide sufficient space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats. | Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats, such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e., not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in parkland) or a patch of scrub. |
| 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 and surrounding habitat, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status. | 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. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water. |
| 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 and surrounding habitat. | Continuous, high-quality habitat, well connected to the wider landscape, likely to be used regularly by commuting bats (e.g., river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High quality habitat, well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts. |

3.4.6 Internally, inspection focussed on searching for the following characteristic evidence of bats:

- Droppings adhered to walls, floors, surfaces, windowsills
- Urine spots on window glass.

And within roof voids attention was also given to:

- All beams, for free-hanging bats
- The ridge and hip beams of the roof and their junctions, for droppings
- Dividing and gable end walls and any chimney breasts for droppings and urine staining
- Materials (e.g., insulation), boards, water tanks and other materials or boxes for droppings, urine staining and corpses on or under such items
- Timber and walls, for evidence of scratch marks and fur oil stains

- Cavity or rubble-filled walls and their potential for access
- Light ingress from outside, indicating other potential access areas
- Feeding remains of prey (e.g., moth or butterfly wings)
- Cool areas suitable for torpor or hibernation.

3.4.7 Externally, the building was examined for any potential roost features, including signs of bats and potential points of access for bats, i.e.:

- Holes in walls, pipes, gaps behind window frames, lintels and doorways.
- Cracks and crevices in stonework/brickwork.
- Gaps between ridge tiles and ridge and roof tiles, e.g., where the mortar has fallen out.
- Gaps between lintels above doors and windows.
- Broken or lifted roof tiles.
- Lifted lead flashing around chimneys, dormer windows, roof valleys and ridges and hips or where lead flashing replaces tiles.
- Gaps between the eaves, soffit board and outside walls.
- Gaps behind weatherboarding, hanging tiles and fascia boarding.
- Likely entry and exit points around the eaves, soffits, fascia and barge boarding and under tiles.
- The presence of cavity walls and rubble-filled walls.
- Bat droppings on the ground, beneath roof exits on ledges, windows, sills, lintels
- Urine spots or stains on windows and sills.
- Fur oil stains, indicating a roost entrance.

Activity Surveys

3.4.8 Three bat activity surveys (two dusk emergence and one dawn re-entry survey) were undertaken from August to September 2022, with dates and timings as outlined in Table 2, below. Surveys normally take place at least two weeks apart, depending on local weather conditions.

3.4.9 The purpose of the surveys was to assess the numbers and species of bats associated with the Site in terms of roosts, commuting pathways and foraging habitat.

3.4.10 The two dusk surveys (09 August and 13 September 2022) comprised a watch of the Site and in particular, of identified potential roost features. This was undertaken from 15 minutes before sunset, until light levels dipped to the extent that accurate assessment of emergence behaviour was no longer possible (approximately 1.5 hours after sunset).

3.4.11 In addition to watching the Site for any signs of bat emergence, bats were identified in flight throughout the survey using either a Wildlife Acoustics EchoMeter 3 bat detector, Batbox Duet detector linked to a high-resolution digital sound recorder and Anabat Express passive acoustic recorders.

3.4.12 Sound data was downloaded, converted from WAV, WAC or Zero Crossing Archive files to zero crossing files. Analysis was undertaken using computer software (Kaleidoscope; AnaloookW; Anabat Insight). This allowed accurate identification to species level.

- 3.4.13 Observation data from surveyors watching the Site from fixed vantage points that ensured its full coverage, was cross-referenced, giving a good understanding of how bats used the Site. Surveyor positions are outlined in Figure 4, below.
- 3.4.14 The dawn swarming survey on 25 August 2022 was undertaken two hours prior to sunrise and 15 minutes thereafter until it was fully light, following the same methodology as described above.
- 3.4.15 Bats engage in characteristic swarming behaviour, circling roost entrances for up to 30 minutes before re-entering a roost. This behaviour is distinctive and facilitates species identification and accurate location of roosts.

Figure 4: Bat Activity Surveys – Surveyor Positions



Nesting birds

- 3.4.16 The survey took place in August within the nesting bird period (typically March – August with some climatic variations). It is noted that some species which typically nest in built structures, such as woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, typically breed April to October, and may breed year-round.
- 3.4.17 Consideration was given to any signs of nesting or territorial behaviour and the suitability of the Site and adjacent habitat to support nesting birds. A search for evidence of active or historic nests was also made.
- 3.4.18 Active nests were discerned from old nests by the presence of breeding birds, and/or the condition of evidence such as droppings and feathers.

Other species

3.4.19 Notes were made of any other protected or notable species of conservation importance that were identified on site, or that have the potential to be present, based on the habitats within the Site, and information gained through the desk survey.

3.5 Survey Conditions and Constraints

3.5.1 Surveys were undertaken by Elizabeth Walker MSc MCIEEM, Natural England Bat Licence registration number 2017-32165-CLS-CLS. Michael Scott, Chris Burton, Gabrielle Bassett and Robert Flint, also assisted with bat activity surveys on the dates outlined in Table 2, below. All surveyors are experienced and have received training from Elizabeth Walker in undertaking bat activity surveys.

3.5.2 Relevant survey conditions are outlined in Table 2, below.

Table 2. Survey Conditions

| SURVEY | DATE | TIMINGS | WEATHER*** |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Walkover Survey (including PRA) | 21 July 2022 | 09:30 – 12:00 | Temperature: 18°C Wind: BF4 Cloud: 4/8 Rain: Zero <i>(Weather conditions consistent throughout survey)</i> |
| Dusk Activity Survey | 09 August 2022 | Survey Start: 20:42 Sunset: 20:57 Survey End: 22:27 | Temperature: 21°C Wind: BF2 Cloud: 4/8 Rain: Zero <i>(Weather conditions consistent throughout survey)</i> |
| Dawn Activity Survey | 25 August 2022 | Survey Start: 03:59 Sunrise: 05:49 Survey End: 06:14 | Temperature: 12°C Wind: BF2 Cloud: 8/8 Rain: Zero <i>(Weather conditions consistent throughout survey)</i> |
| Dusk Activity Survey | 13 September 2022 | Survey Start: 19:18 Sunset: 19:33 Survey End: 21:03 | Temperature: 14°C Wind: BF1 Cloud 4/8 Rain: Zero <i>(Weather conditions consistent throughout survey)</i> |

*Beaufort Scale Wind Force **Cloud measured in Oktas ***Any weather changes noted (in brackets).

3.5.1 The survey has been carried out by a competent and Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE), with reference to published guidance.

3.5.2 The Site and relevant adjacent habitat was inspected thoroughly with no constraints or limitations on the survey.

3.5.3 It is considered that sufficient information was gathered to make an assessment of the Site's suitability for bats, breeding birds and other protected or notable species and to make recommendations.

3.6 Impact Assessment

3.6.1 This assessment adopts a geographic frame of reference (international, national, regional, local, or 'less than local') to assign value on a sliding scale of importance (international being the highest value and importance) to ecological features, with status, as well as geographic distribution, also being considered in terms of species value, for example, the inclusion of a species as an SPI within Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006).

3.6.2 Ecological impacts, where anticipated, are considered in terms of levels of certainty (based on professional judgement), magnitude, extent, duration, reversibility (or permanence), timing and frequency, whether direct / indirect, cumulative and/or in-combination.

4 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

4.1 Designated Sites

Designated Sites within 2km of the Site

- 4.1.1 The data provided by ERIC North East and MAGIC indicates there are two statutory sites (River Tweed Special Area of Conservation and the Tweed Catchment Rivers – England: Till Catchment Site of Special Scientific Interest) within 2km of the Site.
- 4.1.2 There is one non-statutory site, the Kaim Bog – Pallinsburn Northumberland Local Wildlife Site, within 2km of the Site.

Impact Risk Zones for Designated Sites

- 4.1.3 The Site is located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, however the nature and scale of the proposed scheme does not require that Natural England is consulted due to the potential for an adverse impact on a statutorily designated site. See Section 5.2.

4.2 Habitat Description

Priority Habitats within 2km of the Site

- 4.2.1 There are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) as listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) and described as priority habitats⁹, within or adjacent to the Site. HPIs that are located within 2km of the Site include:
- Good quality semi-improved grassland
 - Deciduous woodland
 - Lowland dry acid grassland
 - Lowland heathland

Habitats within and adjacent to the Site boundary

- 4.2.2 The Site comprises a single stone structure with a garden of predominantly ornamental shrubs that extends to 4m from the building around the west, south and east elevations. No habitats were mapped within the Site's red line boundary. A species list was instead compiled. Shrubs and small trees within the Site include crack willow *Salix fragilis*, yew *Taxus baccata*, cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, *Photinia sp.*, various *Hebe spp.*, and Leyland cypress *Cupressus x leylandii*.
- 4.2.3 Herbaceous plants and grasses include rosebay willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, nettle *Urtica dioica*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, large bindweed *Calystegia sylvatica*, green alkanet *Pentaglottis spervirens*, and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*.

⁹ Maddock, A. [Editor] (2008). UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Priority Habitat Descriptions. UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Priority Habitat Descriptions. BRIG. (Updated 2011).

- 4.2.4 A small pond of less than 11m² was noted on Site. This is discussed in paragraph 4.3.16. Plant species noted include yellow flag iris *Iris pseudacorus*, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, and reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*.
- 4.2.5 Habitat immediately adjacent to the Site (within 20m) includes residential gardens, individual mature trees and an area of mixed woodland of 0.64ha.
- 4.2.6 No invasive plant species were found on Site during the walkover survey.

4.3 Protected & Notable Species

Bats

- 4.3.1 The desk survey returned one record of bats within 2km of the Site within the last ten years. This was a maternity roost of pipistrelle *Pipistrellus sp.* bats from 2014 in a dwelling at Ford village. There were also seven earlier records dating from 1985 to 2010 that included two records of brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, one record of Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*, three other records of pipistrelle bats, including one of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, and one record of bats *Vespertilionidae*. It is acknowledged that bats may be under-recorded and present within the search area in unidentified roosts (see next paragraph). Record from the last ten years are detailed in Appendix 7.4.
- 4.3.2 Desk survey data indicated that no EPS mitigation licences for bats have been issued in the study area, with two noted just outside this area. This does not preclude that bats are present within potential development sites.
- 4.3.3 The habitats immediately adjacent to the Site align most closely to the description of moderate suitability for commuting and foraging bats as outlined in good practice bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) and summarised in Table 1, above. The Site has some connectivity to foraging and commuting habitat in the wider survey area, which is considered to be of moderate suitability for bat species, offering woodland, open areas, edge habitat and some aquatic habitat, which many bat species resident in north Northumberland and the Scottish Borders exploit.
- 4.3.4 Trees and large shrubs on Site were not considered to have any potential roost features for bat species.
- 4.3.5 The hibernation potential of the Site was considered to be low. There are no features on site capable of supporting a hibernation roost other than low potential for small crevice-dwelling species. For example, pipistrelles typically use building cracks and crevices for their hibernation roosts, showing a preference for cool, stable temperatures with high humidity.

- 4.3.6 Following the walkover survey, the Site itself was considered to have moderate suitability for roosting bats. (Collins, 2016). The Site appeared to be relatively well-sealed, however there were a number of potential roost features including holes in stonework at wall heads, gaps under slates, lifted lead flashing. Stonework across all elevations was extremely well-sealed with no obvious gaps, other than as just described. There were no field signs of bats anywhere on Site. It was not considered that the Site would support a roost of high conservation value. It was considered more likely the Site would support smaller numbers of crevice-dwelling bat species, such as pipistrelles.
- 4.3.7 Two bat activity surveys were scheduled based on the Site having moderate suitability for roosting bats. On the first survey, an emergence was noted and therefore a third activity survey was also conducted on Site.
- 4.3.8 During the nocturnal surveys, ten roosts were found on Site. Each roost supported a single bat, with nine of these individual roosts being of a soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* bat and one roost being used independently by both a common pipistrelle and a soprano pipistrelle on two separate occasions.
- 4.3.9 Detailed results of bat activity surveys are attached at Appendix 7.2, including details of roost locations, foraging areas, and commuting paths.
- 4.3.10 Detailed results from the PRA undertaken during the Walkover Survey, including descriptions of all elevations and internal spaces, along with photographs, are attached at Appendix 7.1.

Nesting birds

- 4.3.11 No birds of synanthropic species that are likely to use the Site, including passerines, were noted within the desk study information provided by ERIC. Barn owl was recorded, however the records were older than the last ten years.
- 4.3.12 During the walkover survey, birds noted on Site included house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, blackbird *Turdus merula* and woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*.
- 4.3.13 Bird guano was observed within the roof void, although no birds were observed within.
- 4.3.14 Active nests of house sparrow and woodpigeon were observed within the Site and its surrounding garden.
- 4.3.15 House sparrows were observed exiting a hole under guttering at the southern end of the Site's east elevation. Woodpigeons were observed nesting in ornamental shrubs in the garden area of the east elevation.

Other protected and notable species

- 4.3.16 Desk survey records from the last ten years, (Appendix 7.4), include five records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, and three records of red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* within the study area. There are no records of amphibians within the 2km study area (within the last ten years, or earlier), and no EPS licences have been granted within the study area. There is a record of a pond just outside the 2km study area having been assessed as excellent habitat for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, however, no evidence of the presence of great crested newt was found there.

- 4.3.17 A small pond was noted on Site during the walkover survey on 21 July 2022. This was dried out and was assessed in accordance with published guidance¹⁰ to determine its suitability to support great crested newt, based on the Habitat Suitability Index calculation (Oldham et al., 2000). Following the HSI, the pond scored as having poor potential for great crested newt with a score of 0.00000196.
- 4.3.18 In addition to the HSI result suggesting poor suitability for great crested newt, the desk study provided no records for great crested newt and the presence of a minor and a major road bisecting the land immediately adjacent to the Site creates a significant barrier to the movement of any protected amphibian species within the study area.
- 4.3.19 An assessment of the Site for the presence, or potential presence of other protected and notable species was undertaken and it is considered that the Site may afford opportunities for shelter or foraging for hedgehog.
- 4.3.20 No evidence of use of the Site by any other protected or notable species such as red squirrel or badger was observed and the Site itself is not considered to provide any opportunities for such species.

¹⁰ Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143-155.

5 SCHEME IMPACTS, MITIGATION & ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS

5.1 The Site & Proposed Scheme

- 5.1.1 The Site comprises a stone-built former church with pitched slate roof and a small area of garden, situated in the hamlet of Crookham. It is situated immediately adjacent to a minor road and within 300m of the A697 trunk road, surrounded by predominantly arable cropland with areas of deciduous and mixed woodland, residential gardens and individual mature trees and the River Till and Pallin's Burn flow to the north of Site.
- 5.1.2 The proposed scheme is to convert the Site to a residential dwelling within the footprint of the Site. Foul water treatment will be via the existing mains sewer.

5.2 Designated Sites

- 5.2.1 There are three designated sites within 2km of the Site, two statutory and one non-statutory. These are the River Tweed SAC and the Tweed Catchment Rivers – England: Till SSSI. The Local Wildlife Site Kaim Bog is located to the north west of Site.
- 5.2.2 Owing to the location, nature and scope of the proposed scheme with connection to the existing mains drainage system, no direct impacts on designated sites are anticipated either during or post-construction.
- 5.2.3 Although the Site is located within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone, the nature of the proposed scheme is such that the development falls below thresholds specified for further consideration due to the potential for adverse effects. As such, no indirect impacts on the SSSI or other designated sites are anticipated during, or post-construction.
- 5.2.4 The Site is not located within a Nutrient Neutrality Catchment zone and foul water treatment plans have been confirmed.

Ecological Effects on Designated Sites

- 5.2.5 No significant impacts on designated sites are anticipated and therefore no significant ecological effects are predicted.

5.3 Habitats

- 5.3.1 There are no habitats of principal importance (HPI) within the Site. There are no habitats on Site other than ornamental garden shrubs and plants with some tall ruderal species. There are no invasive plant species on Site.
- 5.3.2 In line with comments in Sections 5.2.2, it is not anticipated that there would be any likely direct impacts on priority habitats identified within the study area owing to the nature and scale of the proposed scheme. No other adjacent habitats will be directly impacted by the scheme.

5.3.3 The Site is located within a rural hamlet, close to other residential properties and gardens, arable cropland, a minor road and the A697 trunk road. The proposed scheme is not considered likely to create significant additional disturbance either during or post-construction on habitats important for biodiversity.

Ecological Effects on Habitats

5.3.4 No impacts on habitats of conservation importance are anticipated and therefore there will be no significant negative ecological effects on habitats.

5.4 Protected & Notable Species

5.4.1 Given points 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, indirect impacts on protected and notable species through habitat loss or fragmentation are not anticipated. Nor, given point 5.3.3 is any post-construction impact predicted in relation to habitat loss or fragmentation.

Bats

5.4.2 The Site was characterised as having moderate suitability for foraging, commuting and roosting bats and low hibernation potential.

5.4.3 Bat surveys have revealed a total of ten bat roosts on Site.

5.4.4 Following survey and sound analysis, these roosts have been characterised as non-breeding summer roosts of common (1 roost) and soprano pipistrelle bats (10 roosts, with one of these being the same roost used by a single common pipistrelle on a separate occasion). The peak count of bats in any of these roosts was one individual.

5.4.5 The mean colony size for common pipistrelle bats is around 75 and for soprano pipistrelle bats around 200¹¹. The low number of bats within the roost strongly indicates these are bachelor roosts occupied solely by male bats, which typically roost singly, or in small numbers and are loyal to their roosts, returning to the same roosts year on year, although individuals may have numerous alternative roost sites in close proximity to the main roost. Non-breeding day roosts of widespread and abundant species are, in accordance with the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004; CIEEM, 2021), of Local importance and of lower conservation significance.

5.4.6 Worldwide, the conservation status of pipistrelle bats is “Lower Risk: Least Concern” (Hutson et al 2001) and in the UK “Not Threatened” (Hutson 1993).

5.4.7 The proposed works will impact on these bats and their roosts, therefore, a derogation licence will be required from Natural England.

5.4.8 Mitigation and enhancement measures for bats will be required, including the provision of compensatory roosting habitat in close proximity to existing roosts on Site.

¹¹ Bat Conservation Trust (2010) Species Factsheets. Available at: <https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/what-are-bats/uk-bats> (Accessed 29 August 2022).

- 5.4.9 Pending a derogation licence from Natural England, no works should be undertaken on Site, in order to avoid harm, or disturbance to bats and their roosts, which would result in offences being committed. (See legislation in Appendix 7.5).
- 5.4.10 A method statement, including plans for mitigation and enhancement will be required with the derogation licence application, as part of which, compensatory roosting habitat for bats is required on site.
- 5.4.11 It is proposed that four bat boxes, suitable for crevice-dwelling species such as pipistrelle bats, (for example, the Kent bat box¹²), are erected on the external walls close to the locations of existing roosts. These compensatory roost locations would be proportionate to the roosts that will be lost and would provide a range of temperature conditions for bats on the west, south and east elevations of the Site.

Nesting birds

- 5.4.12 There are features on Site that would support nesting birds and evidence of current and historic nesting activity. Therefore, mitigation will be required if any works are proposed during the breeding bird season (typically, March – August inclusive). A mitigation plan is attached at Appendix 7.3.

Other protected & notable species

- 5.4.13 It is possible that hedgehog may forage on Site and therefore standard mitigation measures are required as a precaution in order to avoid any impacts on hedgehogs:
- Avoid night-working and use of floodlights, to avoid disturbing nocturnal animals;
 - Cover any trenches and pits overnight or if not in use, or provide a means of escape to avoid animals becoming trapped;
 - Store chemicals, waste and spoil safely, away from boundary areas and grassland areas with tall ruderal vegetation or hedgerow;
 - During works, avoid creating habitat on site that may be used by protected or notable species.
- 5.4.14 It is considered unlikely that the proposed scheme will have an impact on any other species identified as present within 2km of the Site, owing to the lack of habitat on Site, and its negligible suitability for protected and notable species, as well as the small-scale nature of the proposed scheme within the Site footprint.

Ecological Effects on Protected & Notable Species

- 5.4.15 Potential impacts on bats and breeding birds have been identified. Mitigation for both bats and breeding birds is required.
- 5.4.16 Potential impacts on hedgehogs have also been identified and standard mitigation methods outlined.
- 5.4.17 No impacts on other protected or notable species are anticipated.

¹² <http://www.kentbatgroup.org.uk/kent-bat-box.pdf>

5.4.18 With a derogation licence from Natural England and appropriate and proportionate mitigation in place, given the nature and context of the proposed scheme, no significant negative ecological effects are predicted on any protected or notable species.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Enhancements

- 6.1.1 The NPPF (paragraph 179b)¹³ promotes inclusion of ecological enhancement within development and encourages development that leads to a measurable net-gain for biodiversity.
- 6.1.2 In addition to the required mitigation, the following enhancements, proportionate to the nature of the proposed scheme, are recommended for the Site:
- i. Attach two bird nesting boxes and two swallow nest bowls to buildings on Site to support nesting birds. Examples of suitable boxes include the Woodstone Swallow Nest Bowl and the Tree Sparrow Nest Box, both available from nhbs.com. Attach a minimum of 2m above the ground and away from windows or doors to prevent droppings near access points.
 - ii. Landscaping of garden areas on Site should incorporate native species of local provenance that will provide habitat for nocturnal insects such as moths, and thereby create a food source for foraging bat species. This will also enhance habitat on Site. Examples of plants include honeysuckle, ivy *Hedera helix* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*.

6.2 Conclusions

- 6.2.1 With mitigation (for bats and breeding birds) in place, no direct or indirect impacts from the proposed scheme during or post-construction are anticipated on any designated sites, habitats of conservation importance, protected or notable species. No significant ecological effects are predicted and no further surveys are required.
- 6.2.2 The proposed scheme has the potential to improve the biodiversity value of the Site by carrying out the recommended enhancement measures, in accordance with national policies for biodiversity net gain (see Appendix 7.5) resulting in benefits for protected species.

¹³ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021). *National Planning Policy Framework*

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Preliminary Roost Assessment – Detailed Results

External Inspection

- 7.1.1 The Site comprises a stone building with pitched slate roof, formerly the United Reformed church at Crookham. The north, east, south and west elevations of the Site are depicted in Figures 5-8. Each elevation is discussed in detail thereafter. Habitat on Site is shown in Figures 9-11.

Figures 5-8: The Site (All Elevations)



Fig. 5: North Elevation



Fig. 6: East Elevation



Fig. 7: South Elevation



Fig. 8: West Elevation

North Elevation

- 7.1.2 The stone gable wall of this elevation is very well sealed, with no gaps or missing mortar and the stonework is overall in very good condition.
- 7.1.3 There are some cracks under stone water tables and there is a 30cm opening into the roof, underneath the church bell. This opening has been previously covered in mesh, however the mesh is torn and partially missing.
- 7.1.4 There are three windows, a large arched window and two narrow vertical windows, as well as a large wooden entrance door. All are very well sealed with no gaps or cracks around window frames or woodwork and no signs of any potential roost features or entry points for bats.
- 7.1.5 Stonework was inspected at close range and using high-powered binoculars however no bats nor signs of bats were observed.
- 7.1.6 The north elevation faces directly onto the minor road, with residential dwellings and gardens on the opposite side. The area in front of the entrance door is tarmacked and forms part of the pedestrian walkway. It is currently being used for storage and for the removal of building materials¹⁴.

East Elevation

- 7.1.7 The east-facing elevation looks out to the side garden. Stonework was again very well-sealed with no gaps or signs of any missing mortar, with the exception of a small area of missing mortar at the ridge and one or two gaps at wall heads by guttering.
- 7.1.8 The slate roof was generally fairly well sealed, when observed through high-powered binoculars, however there were some gaps under old slates, the water tables and areas of lifted lead-flashing around the south-facing aspect of the bell tower (north elevation). There is a glass roof window present at the southern end of this elevation.
- 7.1.9 There is a large metal ventilation opening within the roof and this is mesh-covered, however the mesh is again partially missing. The opening leads to a large metal tube which provides ventilation for the church. This was observed from the interior (see paragraph 7.1.34).
- 7.1.10 Gaps were also noted under guttering at wall-heads, with breeding birds nesting in one gap to the south of this elevation.
- 7.1.11 There are four windows along this elevation, all of which were very well-sealed with no signs of any gaps or cracks around woodwork.
- 7.1.12 There is a small extension or porch area with hipped slate roof to the south of this elevation. This was partially obscured by vegetation; however, it was possible to view this area from close up to check for potential roost features. In general, this extension was also very well-sealed with no signs of gaps or cracks.

¹⁴ Plasterboard had already been stripped from internal walls on the date walkover survey. It was communicated to the client on 25 July 2022 and in emails that no further works can proceed until the results of the ecological surveys are complete and any required mitigation is in place.

7.1.13 The elevation was carefully checked throughout the inspection for droppings or other signs of bats and none were found.

7.1.14 Habitat close to this elevation includes native and ornamental garden shrubs, including yew and Leyland cypress. To the further east is an area of grassland with individual mature deciduous trees. The vegetation partially obscures the elevation, however it was possible to view all aspects of the structure at close hand.

South Elevation

7.1.15 This section of the Site is currently the only portion that forms domestic living space as the Site awaits development.

7.1.16 The stonework of this gable end is relatively well-sealed, as well as the large chimney.

7.1.17 The roof and lead-flashing appeared to be generally well-sealed. There were some gaps at wall heads beneath guttering.

7.1.18 There is a small extension that is pebble-dashed and cement-sealed. Slates of this extension are generally well-sealed with no gaps at wall head.

7.1.19 Door and window openings were all well-sealed. There were no obvious gaps behind the bargeboard.

7.1.20 After inspection at close range and with high-powered binoculars, no bat signs were observed on the exterior at this elevation.

7.1.21 Surrounding habitat includes a small strip of garden where an oil tank is located. There are ornamental shrubs and some areas of tall ruderal vegetation, with a fence separating the next portion of land, on which is an area planted with native and ornamental deciduous trees.

West Elevation

7.1.22 This is the largest area of garden, which is primarily paths of gravel substrate with herbaceous borders. There is also a large crack willow tree and a small, dried out pond (see Section 4.3 and paragraph 4.3.16, above). There is a small wooden bridge over the pond. This has no potential roost features for bats.

7.1.23 The slate roof and ridge is generally well-sealed, with one or two areas of lifted slates. The lead-flashing adjacent to the bell tower on the north elevation appears intact and well-sealed. There is a glass roof window at the southern end of this elevation.

7.1.24 Stonework is in good condition with no gaps or cracks that would admit roosting bats. There are several windows, all of which are also in good condition with woodwork intact and no discernible gaps.

7.1.25 One or two gaps were observed at wallheads under guttering.

- 7.1.26 The southern portion of this elevation protrudes further into the garden and has a hipped roof. There is a doorway and window, both of which are well-sealed. This section is currently in domestic use.
- 7.1.27 After a thorough search with high-powered binoculars and torch, no field signs of bats were observed on this elevation.

Figures 9-11: Habitat on Site



Fig. 9: Pond, no water present, west elevation



Fig. 10: Habitat on south elevation

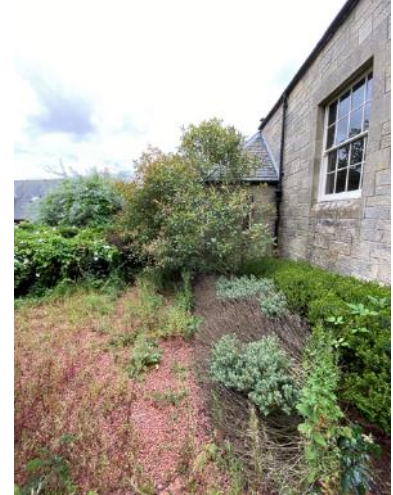


Fig. 11 Habitat east elevation.

Internal Inspection

- 7.1.28 There was full access to the interior, other than the small portion of domestic living space to the south of Site.
- 7.1.29 Inside, the former church is light-filled and has a high-vaulted ceiling which has been plasterboarded, as have the walls. There was some work underway to remove plasterboarding from walls, however it was discussed with clients that works must stop pending results of the ecological surveys.
- 7.1.30 There is a concave glass window within the ceiling, which extends into the roof.
- 7.1.31 Access to the roof void was gained through extendable ladders and a full inspection with high-powered torch was undertaken. The roof void has a boarded walkway, enabling full access throughout.
- 7.1.32 The roof void is open to the rafters and ridge beam. A careful and thorough check was undertaken for the presence of free-hanging bats, such as brown long-eared bats. However, no bats were present.

- 7.1.33 The interior of the roof has substantial dust and cobwebs covering the wood sarking and windows. There is considerable light ingress from the glass domed window to the church below. At the south elevation there are window lights in the roof which add significantly to the light ingress. The gable walls are limewashed on both the north and south elevations.
- 7.1.34 There is a large ventilation shaft constructed in aluminium, which connects with the ventilation grilles in the east and west roof pitches. There is no access from the metal ventilation feature into the interior of the roof. This is not considered to have any bat roost potential, being constructed entirely of metal, which would not provide a consistent temperature. Whilst it was not possible to view the interior it is assumed to have a smooth metal surface that would not be possible for bats to grip and enter.
- 7.1.35 The small window opening in the north elevation under the bell tower is partially mesh-covered, however, as noted in paragraph 7.1.3, above, the mesh has come away and allows access into the roof.
- 7.1.36 A very thorough check was made of every surface throughout the entire roof void, including the boarded floor and wood sarking, however no signs of any bat droppings, fur oil or urine staining, or other signs of bats were observed anywhere within the roof void.
- 7.1.37 An inspection was also made of the interior of the pebble-dashed lean-to accessed via a door on the western elevation at its southern end. The interior is open to the roof timbers and has stone walls. It is in daily use as a boiler room and workshop. There are considerable cobwebs and there is a window to the east that provides a source of substantial light ingress. There is a boarded window on the south elevation which has a metal ventilation grille. There were no bats, nor signs of bats present within this small interior.
- 7.1.38 Figures 12-15, below, depict the interiors and the roof void.

Figures 12-15: Site Interiors



Fig. 12: Interior of church



Fig. 13: Roof void with ventilation shaft



Fig. 14: Glass-domed roof, southern part of roof void



Fig. 15: Interior of lean-to at south elevation

Overall Site Suitability for Roosting Bats

- 7.1.39 Following the combined external and internal assessment, the Site was considered to align most closely with the description of moderate suitability (Collins, 2016), as regards roosting habitat. The Site is generally very well-sealed in terms of stonework and slate roof, however, there are some areas of slipped slates, lifted flashing and gaps at wallheads under guttering, for example. The roof void is light-filled, with no signs of bats present, however, the space would provide flight space for species such as brown long-eared bats and there is an opening to the void from the north elevation.
- 7.1.40 Therefore, there are a number of potential roost features that may be exploited by small-numbers of crevice-dwelling bat species on Site. There is also suitable foraging habitat for bats immediately on or adjacent to Site. There is some connectivity to other foraging habitat within the wider landscape. However, there was a lack of bat field signs and no evidence of a larger roost of higher conservation value.
- 7.1.41 Two nocturnal activity surveys were considered appropriate as a precaution to ensure an accurate assessment of any bat roosts present on Site.
- 7.1.42 The results of these surveys, and a subsequent third survey following the identification of a roost on the initial dusk survey, are outlined in Section 7.2, below.

7.2 Bat Activity Surveys – Detailed Results

Overview

- 7.2.1 Survey timings and conditions are outlined in Table 1, on page 14, above, and surveyor positions are depicted in Figure 4 on page 13, above.
- 7.2.2 Four bat species were encountered during the surveys, all in low numbers of one to two bats being observed at any one time. The most active species across the Site were soprano pipistrelle. Brown long-eared bats were also recorded frequently, as were common pipistrelles. Foraging Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* bats were heard during the dawn survey on 25 August 2022.
- 7.2.3 Eight roosts and two potential roosts of pipistrelle bats were observed on Site during activity surveys.
- 7.2.4 Roost locations and commuting routes / foraging activity are depicted below in Figures 16 and 17.

Survey 1 (Dusk) 09/08/22

- 7.2.5 During this survey, bat activity was fairly limited across the Site, however two bat roosts were observed. One roost is located at the wallhead of the east elevation, close to the northern section of this area, and the other was located under guttering at the north end of the west elevation.
- 7.2.6 The first bat, seen at 21:18 was an emerging soprano pipistrelle from under guttering on the west elevation.

- 7.2.7 A noctule *Nyctalus noctula* was observed flying across the Site at 21:29 and another pass was seen at 21:34, with the bat flying north to south above the roof.
- 7.2.8 Also at 21:34, a soprano pipistrelle was observed emerging from the wallhead of the east elevation.
- 7.2.9 Commuting and foraging passes of predominantly soprano pipistrelles were observed across the Site throughout the survey, although these were infrequent and bat activity was generally low throughout the survey. Social calls of soprano pipistrelle were also noted throughout the survey.
- 7.2.10 Observations of brown long-eared bats were made late in the survey at the west elevation, at 22:32 and 22:28.
- 7.2.11 The last bat recordings were pipistrelle social calls at 22:30.
- 7.2.12 Commuting activity was in a north-south or east-west direction throughout the survey and foraging activity was focussed on habitat around the west and south elevations of Site, with key foraging areas being habitat to the south west of the Site and to the immediate west of Site.

Survey 2 (Dawn) 25/08/22

- 7.2.13 During this survey, three roosts were observed. One at the wallhead of the east elevation towards the northern end was also observed in the first dusk survey. A second was noted on the southern elevation at the gable end under lead flashing, and a third at the south elevation under the guttering of the lean-to structure. A fourth potential roost was observed at the midpoint of the west elevation under guttering.
- 7.2.14 The first bat heard, but not seen, was a common pipistrelle at 03:59 close to the north elevation.
- 7.2.15 Throughout the survey, all surveyors reported low bat activity. Mostly heard but not seen passes and foraging activity of soprano pipistrelles was recorded, which was again located primarily in habitat to the south west and west of Site. Brown long-eared bats were also heard foraging, particularly to the west and south of Site, during the period from around 04:30 to 05:10 and Natterer's bats were recorded foraging in the first half of the survey with brief passes between 04:20 and 05:00
- 7.2.16 At 05:22 a soprano pipistrelle was observed entering a roost on the gable end of the south elevation under lead flashing
- 7.2.17 At 05:28, a potential roost of a soprano pipistrelle was observed, with two soprano pipistrelles seen foraging at the southwest corner of the Site, before one flew along the west elevation and disappeared at the midpoint under guttering.
- 7.2.18 At 05:33 a soprano pipistrelle was observed entering a roost at the wallhead of the east elevation close to the northern end, as also seen on the first dusk survey (paragraph 7.2.7).

7.2.19 At 05:34 a soprano pipistrelle entered a roost on the western side of the lean to at the southern elevation under guttering. This was the last bat observed.

Survey 3 (Dusk) 13/09/22

7.2.20 Four roosts and one potential roost, each of a single soprano pipistrelle bat, were observed on Site during this survey. All roosts were in new locations, with no observations of emergences from roosts previously recorded, indicating that bats are using roost features on Site opportunistically.

7.2.21 The first bat was recorded at 19:53 in an apparent emergence from midway on the roof behind the chimney on the south elevation. No other surveyors observed the bat, whilst recordings from adjacent passive detectors captured a brief echolocation indicative of an emergence. The flight pattern and size of the bat was indicative of a pipistrelle bat. Recordings after this potential emergence were all of soprano pipistrelle bats and it is therefore considered that this may have been an emergence of a soprano pipistrelle bat.

7.2.22 At 19:57 a soprano pipistrelle bat emerged from a hole under a gutter on the eastern side of the south elevation.

7.2.23 At 19:59 a bat emerged silently from a roost on the west elevation, under flashing above the porch to the southern end of the building. The shape of the bat and flight pattern was suggestive of a pipistrelle species. Soprano pipistrelles were heard foraging straight after around the south west of Site, therefore it is assumed that this may be the roost of a single soprano pipistrelle bat.

7.2.24 At 20:00 common and soprano pipistrelles were heard foraging around the northern part of Site, which saw more activity than on previous surveys.

7.2.25 At 20:01 a soprano pipistrelle emerged from the south elevation under guttering and at 20:11 a soprano pipistrelle emerged from a hole under guttering and above a satellite dish on the east elevation.

7.2.26 Foraging activity of brown long-eared bats and soprano pipistrelles was noted around the west and south elevations in particular. Activity on the east elevation was very quiet, with only commuting passes. Common pipistrelles were also heard, although less frequently.

Summary

7.2.27 Bat activity was low across all surveys, with activity of soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats as well as some common pipistrelle and (on the dawn survey only) Natterer's bat encounters mostly associated with commuting passes across Site and foraging activity predominantly in habitat on the south and west of Site.

7.2.28 Individual pipistrelle bats, predominantly soprano pipistrelles, are using roost features across the Site opportunistically, with every roost, except roost A (see Table 4) observed as active on only one occasion.

7.2.29 Eight roosts and two potential roosts were found on Site, all of individual bats.

7.2.30 Roost locations are summarised in Table 4 and depicted in Figure 16, below. Commuting and foraging paths are shown in Figure 17.

Table 4: Roost Location Summary

| ROOST NAME | LOCATION ON SITE | NO. & SPECIES OF BATS PRESENT PER SURVEY |
|------------|---|---|
| A | East Elevation: hole at wallhead close to northern section | Common pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #1 Dusk); Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #2 Dawn) |
| B | East Elevation: hole under gutter, above satellite dish | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #3 Dusk) |
| C | West Elevation: at hole under gutter midway along the elevation (potential roost) | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #2 Dawn) |
| D | West Elevation: at hole under gutter close to the northern section | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #1 Dusk) |
| E | West Elevation: under flashing above porch to the southern section | Soprano* pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #3 Dusk) *(assumed) |
| F | South Elevation: behind chimney midway up the slate roof (potential roost) | Soprano* pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #3 Dusk) *(assumed) |
| G | South Elevation: under lead flashing at gable end | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #2 Dawn) |
| H | South Elevation: under guttering on west side of lean-to | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #2 Dawn) |
| I | South Elevation: at hole under guttering close to the southwest corner | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #3 Dusk) |
| J | South Elevation: under guttering close to the easternmost window | Soprano pipistrelle x 1 (Survey #3 Dusk) |

Figure 16: Roost Locations

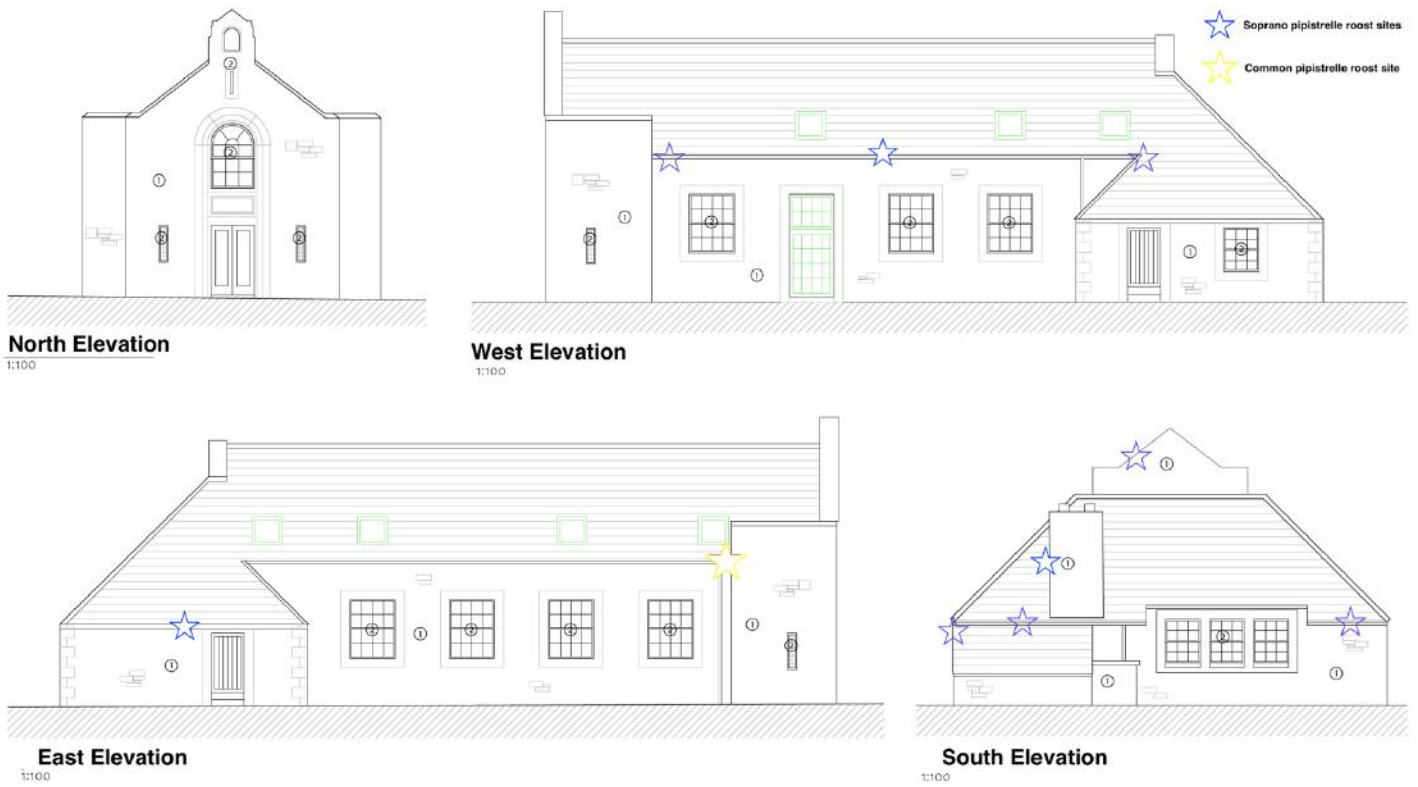
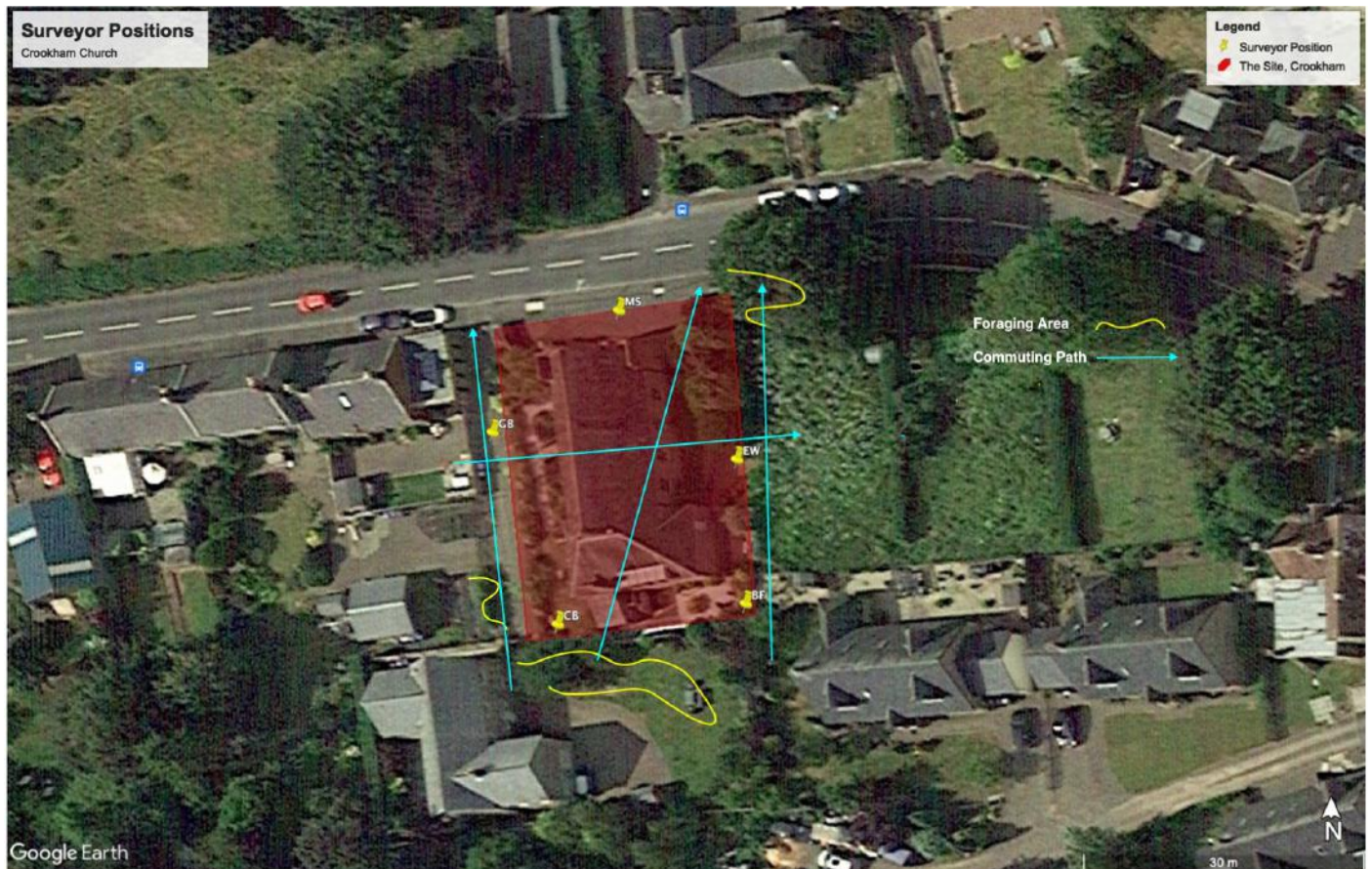


Figure 17: Main Commuting & Foraging Paths



7.3 Breeding Bird Mitigation Plan

MITIGATION PLAN – BREEDING BIRDS

A. GENERAL

- i) The breeding bird (or nesting) season runs from March to the end of August – although some species will nest into September.
- ii) Avoiding the breeding bird season will ensure that nesting birds do not delay the commencement of works. The whole site can be worked on immediately.
- iii) However, if the breeding bird season cannot be avoided and works have to commence, preventative mitigation measures and pre-construction monitoring will be required as outlined below, to ensure compliance with the law.
- iv) It should be noted that the risk of nesting birds will increase as the breeding season progresses.
- v) To avoid damage or disruption to active nests and offences under the law, the following mitigation shall be applied:

B. PRE-WORKS

1. All site workers must be informed of and understand their responsibilities under the law. They must immediately report any suspected nesting birds encountered within the development site boundary.
2. Development should be planned so that construction works avoid dismantling or other physical disruption of building fabric during the breeding bird season.
3. Any known or potential access points to the structures proposed for development must not be blocked during the breeding bird season.
4. Known or potential access points can be blocked out with the nesting season, if a breeding bird survey has first been undertaken by a competent ecologist, confirming no active nests are present within the development site.
5. If unforeseen works are unavoidable during the breeding bird season, a competent ecologist must undertake adequate checks before commencement. Such checks will be valid for a maximum period of 48 hours. Works must commence within 48 hours of the checking survey.
6. If pre-works checks discover active nests, these must be cordoned off and a suitably sized buffer zone established around the nesting area, which shall be determined by the ecologist. This exclusion zone will remain in place until all nesting birds have fledged and left the territory.

C. DURING WORKS

7. There is potential for construction works to create habitat for breeding birds, for example within bare ground or stored materials. If breeding birds are found on site after works commence, a competent ecologist must be contacted for advice. A buffer zone must be established as per point 6, above, to prevent damage or disturbance to the nest area.
8. All personnel on site must maintain vigilance throughout the breeding season for any birds nesting on site.

7.4 Ecological Features within 2km of Site

7.4.1 Table 3 gives details of ecological features found within 2km of the development within the last ten years. Given the nature, scale and footprint of the development, only records for bats, synanthropic bird species that may find nesting opportunities within residential gardens and built structures and other relevant protected or notable species are included.

Ecological Features within 2km of Site

| FEATURE | QUALIFYING INTEREST/ FEATURES | | | CONDITION ¹⁵ | WCA 1981* | CHSR** |
|---|--|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------|
| Designated Sites | | | | | | |
| River Tweed SAC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation ○ Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> ○ European otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> ○ Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> ○ Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ○ River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> | | | Unfavourable | ✓ | ✓ |
| Tweed Catchment Rivers – England: Till SSSI. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part of the River Tweed system, Till Catchment Rivers are clean rivers of high conservation and ecological value ○ Natural vegetation succession from mineral-poor upland streams to mineral-rich lowland rivers ○ Floating beds of water crowfoot <i>Ranunculus</i> of international significance ○ Blooming of diatom <i>Didymosphenia</i> in the headwaters draining the Cheviot (unique in England) ○ Fish fauna including salmon, three species of lamprey (as detailed under the River Tweed qualifying interest). ○ Important habitat for otters | | | Unfavourable | ✓ | ✓ |
| FEATURE | NO. RECORDS (ABUNDANCE) | MOST RECENT RECORD | NERC S.41*** | LOCAL BAP† | WCA 1981* | CHSR** |
| Other Protected & Notable Species | | | | | | |
| Brown hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i> | 1 | 2015 | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Eurasian red squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> | 3 (4) | 2015 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Pipistrelle bat <i>Pipistrellus sp.</i> | 1 | 2014 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| West European hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> | 5 | 2020 | ✓ | ✓ | | |

*Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). All nesting birds are protected under this Act. The table indicates those with additional protection under Schedule 1.

**The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

***Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Section 41

****And also, Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)

†Local Biodiversity Action Plan (Specifically, the Northumberland BAP)

¹⁵ As defined by JNCC (2019) Available at: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/key-aspects-of-common-standards-monitoring-csm/>. Accessed 13/07/22.

7.5 Relevant Legislation & Policy

This section summarises general legislation and policy, and legislation pertaining to particular species, relevant to the main report text. This section does not provide full detail on all aspects of relevant legislation and does not constitute legal or planning advice.

| LEGISLATION / POLICY | DETAIL |
|--|--|
| A. GENERAL RELEVANT LEGISLATION | |
| I. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) | <p>i) The WCA 1981 (as amended) is the primary piece of legislation relating to nature conservation in Great Britain. The Act is supplemented by provisions in the CRoW Act 2000 and the NERC Act 2006. It provides for the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest by Natural England. It also sets out, in schedules, important and invasive species which are legally protected or require active management.</p> <p>ii) The WCA consolidates and amends existing national legislation to implement the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive) in Great Britain (NB Council Directive 79/409/EEC has now been replaced by Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version)).</p> |
| II. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) | <p>i) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) consolidate the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 with subsequent amendments. The Regulations transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC, on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive), into national law. They also transpose elements of the EU Wild Birds Directive in England and Wales.</p> <p>ii) The Regulations came into force on 30th November 2017 and extend to England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland (reserved matters) and Northern Ireland (excepted matters).</p> <p>iii) Changes were made to the Habitats Regulations 2017, amending them via the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (The 2019 Regulations) to make them operable from 01 January 2021 post Brexit, and with functions transferred to ministers from the European Commission.</p> |
| IV. Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 | <p>i) The NERC Act 2006 came into force on 1st October 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act require the Secretary of State to publish a list of habits and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England as required by the Act. In accordance with the Act, the Secretary of State keeps this list under review and will publish a revised list if necessary, in consultation with Natural England.</p> <p>ii) The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local authorities and utilities companies, in implementing their duty under section 40 of the NERC Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions, including development control and planning. This is commonly referred to as the ‘Biodiversity Duty’.</p> |

iii) Guidance for public authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty¹⁶ has been published by Defra. One of the key messages in this document is that ‘conserving biodiversity includes restoring and enhancing species populations and habitats, as well as protecting them.’ In England, the administration of the planning system and licensing schemes are highlighted as having a ‘profound influence on biodiversity conservation’. Local authorities are required to take measures to ‘promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species.’ The guidance states that ‘the duty aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, and to make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision making.’

iv) In 2007, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Partnership published an updated list of priority UK species and habitats, covering terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity to focus conservation action for rarer species and habitats in the UK. The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework¹⁷, which covers the period from 2011 to 2020, now succeeds the UK BAP. The UK priority list contained 1150 species and 65 habitats requiring special protection and has been used as a reference to draw up the lists of species and habitats of principal importance in England.

v) There are 56 habitats of principal importance (HPI) and 943 species of principal importance (SPI) on the S41 list. These are all the habitats and species found in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK BAP and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities in the subsequent UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

V. The Environment Act 2021

i) The Environment Act (2021) has two main functions:

1. To give a legal framework for environmental governance in the UK.
2. To bring in measures for improvement of the environment in relation to waste, resource efficiency, air quality, water, nature and biodiversity, and conservation.

ii) The first part of the Act puts duties on the Government in relation to environmental governance. This includes requiring the Government to:

- o put in place measures to allow the Government to set and meet long-term targets related to the natural environment and people’s enjoyment of the environment;
- o set at least one long-term target each related to priority areas of air, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste by October 2022;
- o set and meet an air quality target for fine particulate matter;
- o set and meet a target related to the abundance of species;
- o review environmental targets periodically to consider if meeting them would significantly improve the natural environment in England;
- o put in place the processes for setting and amending long-term targets;
- o have an Environmental Improvement Plan containing steps it intends to take to improve the natural environment. The plan must be for at least 15 years. ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ published by the Government in 2018 can be treated as such a plan; and
- o collect and publish data related to measuring progress for improving the natural environment and meeting targets.

It also establishes a new body, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

¹⁶ Defra, 2007. Guidance for Public Authorities on Implementing The Biodiversity Duty. (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb12585-pa-guid-english-070516.pdf>)

¹⁷ JNCC and Defra (on behalf of the Four Countries’ Biodiversity Group). 2012. UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. July 2012. (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6189>)

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- iii) Other relevant parts of the Act include, in regards to nature and biodiversity:
- o A new general condition is added to the *Town and Country Planning Act 1990* so that planning permission granted in England requires a biodiversity gain plan to be submitted and approved.
- ii) The Act mandates at least a 10 per cent improvement in ‘biodiversity value’ (termed ‘biodiversity net gain’), cementing the existing requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, see Section C, below) for local planning authorities to encourage developers to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments ‘especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity’.

B. LEGISLATION PERTAINING TO RELEVANT SPECIES

I. Nesting Birds

i) All wild bird nests are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition, for some rarer species (listed on Schedule 1 of the Act), it is an offence to disturb them whilst they are nest building, or at, or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

ii) The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) places duties on competent authorities (Including Local Authorities and National Park Authorities) in relation to wild bird habitat. These provisions relate back to Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (2009/147/EC, ‘Birds Directive’¹⁸. Regulation 10 (3) requires that the objective is the ‘preservation, maintenance and re-establishment of a sufficient diversity and area of habitat for wild birds in the United Kingdom, having regard to the requirements of Article 2 of the new Wild Birds Directive...’ Regulation 10 (7) states: ‘In considering which measures may be appropriate for the purpose of security or contributing to the objective in [Regulation 10 (3)] Paragraph 3, appropriate account must be taken of economic and recreational requirements.

iii) In relation to the duties placed on competent authorities under the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended), Regulation 10 (8) states: ‘So far as lies within their powers, a competent authority in exercising any function [including in relation to town and country planning] in or in relation to the United Kingdom must use all reasonable endeavours to avoid any pollution or deterioration of habitats of wild birds (except habitats beyond the outer limits of the area to which the new Wild Birds Directive applies).’

II. Bats

i) All species of bat in Britain are ‘European Protected Species’ (EPS) and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to EPS and their habitats, making it an offence to: deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat; intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats; damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time); possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat; intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

¹⁸ 2009/147/EC Birds Directive (30 November 2009. European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

ii) A bat roost may be any structure a bat uses for breeding, resting, shelter or protection. It is important to note that since bats tend to re-use the same roost sites, legal opinion is that a bat roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time, although this has not yet been tested in law.

iii) Although the law provides strict protection to bats and other EPS, it also allows this protection to be set aside (derogation) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) through the issuing of licences. Natural England determines whether a derogation licence may be granted for development works in England.

C. POLICY

I. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated 2021)

i) The Government published the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 20 July 2021. The below excerpts are included as having relevance to planning applications and biodiversity including protected sites, habitats and species.

ii) Three objectives for sustainable development (economy, social, environmental) are set out in paragraphs 8-10, to be delivered through plan preparation and implementation level. Paragraph 8c outlines the environmental objective to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment and to help ‘improve biodiversity’.

iii) Paragraph 174 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing...sites of biodiversity value... ‘(in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)’; recognising the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including trees and woodland; minimising impacts on and providing net gains in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.

iv) Regarding protected sites, paragraph 175 requires local planning authorities to distinguish, at plan level, ‘between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value...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.’

v) Paragraph 179 refers to how plans should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity. Plans should: ‘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 [a footnote refers to ODPM Circular 06/2005 for further guidance in respect of statutory guidance in respect of the planning system], wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by national and local partnerships for restoration and re-creation 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.’

vi) Paragraph 180 advises that when determining planning applications, ‘...local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- 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;
- Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 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 SSSIs;
- 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 reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists;
- Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.’

vii) In paragraph 181, the following should be given the same protection as habitats sites¹⁹:

- Potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation
- Listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
- 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

viii) In paragraph 182 the NPPF refers back to sustainable development in relation to appropriate assessment and states: ‘the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment because of its potential impact on a habitats site is being planned or determined.’

ix) In paragraph 183, the NPPF refers to planning policies and decisions taking account of ground conditions and risks arising from land instability and contamination at sites. In relation to risks associated with land remediation account is to be taken of ‘potential impacts on the natural environment’.

x) Paragraph 185 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that development is appropriate to the location and take into account likely effects (including cumulative) on the natural environment and, in doing so, they ‘should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.’

II. Government
Circular ODPM

i) Paragraph 98 advises that ‘the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal

¹⁹ Habitats sites are defined in the glossary as ‘Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.’

| | |
|--|---|
| 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation ²⁰ | that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Local authorities should consult Natural England before granting planning permission. They should consider attaching appropriate planning conditions or entering into planning obligations under which the developer would take steps to secure the long-term protection of the species. They should also advise developers that they must comply with any statutory species' protection provisions affecting the site concerned...'. ii) Paragraph 99 advises 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 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.' |
| III. Standing Advice (GOV.UK) | i) The GOV.UK website provides information regarding protected species and sites in relation to development proposals: 'Local planning authorities should take advice from Natural England or the Environment Agency about planning applications for developments that may affect protected species.' GOV.UK advises that 'some species have standing advice which you can use to help with planning decisions. For others you should contact Natural England or the Environment Agency for an individual response.' ii) The standing advice (originally from Natural England and now held and updated on GOV.UK ²¹) provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present. It also provides advice on survey and mitigation requirements. iii) When determining an application for a development that is covered by standing advice, in accordance with the guidance in Government Circular 06/2005, Local planning authorities are required to take the standing advice into account. In paragraph 82 of the aforementioned Circular, it is stated that: 'The standing advice will be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application in the same way as any advice received from a statutory consultee...it is up to the planning authority to decide the weight to be attached to the standing advice, in the same way as it would decide the weight to be attached to a response from a statutory consultee.' |
| IV. HM Government – 25 Year Environment Plan | i) The 25-year plan to improve the environment sets out what the government intends to do to increase biodiversity, reduce climate change and secure ecosystem services. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats, and to 'leave the environment in a better state than we found it.' ²² |
| V. Local Development Plan | The proposed scheme is located within the Northumberland Local Plan area. Relevant policies (which have regard to national policy and national and international legislation, as outlined above) are: QOP1 Design principles |

²⁰ ODPM Circular 06/2005. Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impacts within the Planning System (2005). HMSO Norwich.

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals#standing-advice-for-protected-species>

²² CIRIA (2019) *Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development Case studies*. CIRIA, London.

QOP4 Landscaping and trees
ENV1
ENV2 Biodiversity and geodiversity
