

## **Planning Application Biodiversity Checklist**

All Local Authorities have a duty to consider the conservation of biodiversity when determining planning applications.

This checklist has been designed to assist in defining what, if any, biodiversity surveys and reports are required for certain types of applications in order to validate them.

Ecological information that accompanies any planning application should meet the requirements of BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development.

Where a survey recommends additional surveys be carried out, these will also be required in order to validate the application.

**THE QUICK-CHECK LIST IN THIS DOCUMENT MUST BE COMPLETED FOR ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND SUBMITTED ALONG WITH ANY SUPPORTING INFORMATION REQUIRED**

Failure to submit this checklist, or any supporting documents identified, may lead to applications being refused for insufficient information.

The Local Authority reserves the right to request additional information during the course of the application, and may invalidate applications during the course of the process should incorrect information be provided on this checklist.

Designated Statutory Sites may be found on the 'My Maps' tab of our website [here](#)

In Accordance With  
The Town and Country Planning (Development Management  
Procedure) Order 2010

January 2016

Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Planning Departments follows guidance from Suffolk County Council and has adopted this in its approach to biodiversity. This guidance has been reproduced on the following pages and should be followed when determining whether a survey is required. The Quick Check in this document is designed to help identify where a survey will be required and indicate to the Local Planning Authorities what the site comprises. If the checklist indicates surveys are required the guidance as to the type of survey may be found further in the document. Where there is any doubt a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

A Biodiversity or Geodiversity Assessment is required where the site includes or is close to:

- sites designated for their biodiversity or geodiversity importance, i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), RAMSAR sites, National Nature Reserves (NNR), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), County Wildlife Sites (CWS), and Habitats listed in the UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP) and Regionally Important Geological/geomorphologic Sites (RIGS) designations; See Appendix A, Tables 2 & 3.
- areas including or close to recorded locations of Protected Species, and Species listed in the UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP), See Appendix A, Table 1; and;
- other areas identified in pre-application discussions as potentially containing Protected and BAP species.

Where Assessment is required according to the development type and Species affected as identified in Tables 2 and 3, the appropriate seasons for undertaking ecological surveys are identified in Figure 2 attached to Table 1.

If you consider that surveys are not required, despite the following questions indicating otherwise, please provide a reason as to why you consider as such:

# Quick check

To be completed and submitted with each planning application

	Yes	No	
Buildings (are any of the following being modified, demolished or converted?)			
Agricultural Buildings, particularly of traditional brick or stone construction and/or with exposed wooden beams greater than 20cm thick		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, barn owls and breeding birds
Buildings with weatherboarding and/or hanging tiles that are within 200 metres of a woodland and/or water		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats
Pre-1960 detached buildings or structures within 200m of woodland and/or water		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats
Pre-1914 buildings within 400 metres of a woodland and/or water		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats
Pre-1914 buildings with gable ends or slate roofs, regardless of location		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats
Tunnels, mines, kilns, ice-houses, adits, military fortifications, air raid shelters, cellars or similar underground ducts and structures		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats
Bridge structures, aqueducts or viaducts (especially over water and wet ground)		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats
Does the proposal involve lighting of churches or Listed Buildings, or flood lighting of green space within 50 metres of woodland, water, field hedgerows or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water?			
		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, barn owls and breeding birds
Does the proposal affect woodland, field hedgerows and/or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water bodies?			
		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, breeding birds, dormice, red squirrels, badgers and amphibians
Trees (does the proposal involve works that affect the following?)			
Old and veteran trees that are older than 100 years		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly relating to bats and breeding birds
Trees with obvious holes, cracks or cavities		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly relating to bats and breeding birds
Trees with a girth greater than 1 metre at chest height		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly relating to bats and breeding birds

	Yes	No	
<b>Other Habitats</b>			
Does the proposal affect gravel pits, quarries or natural cliff faces and rock outcrops with crevices, caves or swallets		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly relating to bats, breeding birds and reptiles
Is the proposal for a major development within 500 metres of a pond or a minor development within 100 metres of a pond?		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to great crested newts
Is the proposal affecting, or within, 200 metres of rivers, streams, canals, lakes or other aquatic habitats?		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, breeding birds, otters, water voles, amphibians and plants
Does the proposal affect 'derelict' land (brownfield sites), allotments, railway land or rough grassland?		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to breeding birds, great crested newts, badgers, reptiles, amphibians, plants and invertebrates
Does the proposal effect woodland (including scrub and hedgerows) which is on, adjacent to or linked to the site?		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, breeding birds, badgers, dormouse, invertebrates and plants.
Does the proposal effect meadows, grassland, parkland or pastures on, adjacent to or linked to the site by other semi-natural habitats.		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, badgers, great crested news, invertebrates, reptiles and plants.
Does the proposal consist of or include one or more large wind turbines?		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats and breeding birds.
Does the proposal consist of or include one or more small wind turbines?		NO	If yes, surveys will be required, particularly in relation to bats, barn owls and breeding birds.
To the best of your knowledge, are any protected species such as, but not limited to, bats, protected birds, great crested newts, reptiles, water voles, badgers or otters present within the site or potentially affected by the proposal?		NO	If yes, please provide an appropriate assessment





### ***Exceptions for When a Full Species Survey and Assessment may not be Required***

- a. Following consultation by the applicant at the pre-application stage, the LPA has stated in writing that no protected or priority species surveys and assessments are required.
- b. If it is clear that no protected or priority species are present, despite the guidance in the above table indicating that they are likely, the applicant should provide evidence with the planning application to demonstrate that such species are absent (e.g. this might be in the form of a brief report from a suitably qualified and experienced person, or a relevant local nature conservation organisation).
- c. If it is clear that the development proposal will not affect any protected or priority species present, then only limited information needs to be submitted. This information should, however, (i) demonstrate that there will be no significant impact on any protected or priority species present and (ii) include a statement acknowledging that the applicant is aware that it is a criminal offence to disturb or harm protected species should they subsequently be found or disturbed.

In some situations, it may be appropriate for an applicant to provide a protected or priority species survey and report for only one or a few of the species shown in the Table above e.g. those that are likely to be affected by a particular activity. Applicants should make clear which species are included in the report and which are not because exceptions apply.

**TABLE 2****Local Requirements for Designated Sites and Priority Habitats and Habitats Listed in Suffolk BAP: Criteria (Trigger List) for When a Survey and Assessment are Required with an Application**

<b>1. DESIGNATED SITES</b> (as shown on the Council's Development Plan Proposals Map)	
<b>Internationally designated sites and identified HRA constraint zones</b>	Special Protection Area (SPA) Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Ramsar Site
<b>Nationally designated sites</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) National Nature Reserve (NNR)
<b>Regionally and locally designated sites</b>	County Wildlife Sites (CWS) Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
<p><b>2. PRIORITY HABITATS</b> (Habitats of Principal Importance for Biodiversity under S.41 of the NERC Act 2006) &amp; Regulations 9 (1) and 9 (5) of Conservation of Habitats &amp; Species Regulations 2012) (BAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Arable field margins</li> <li>▪ Coastal and Floodplain grazing marsh</li> <li>▪ Coastal saltmarsh (see combined Suffolk plan for saltmarsh &amp; mudflats)</li> <li>▪ Coastal sand dunes</li> <li>▪ Coastal vegetated shingle</li> <li>▪ Hedgerows</li> <li>▪ Intertidal mudflats (see combined Suffolk plan for saltmarsh &amp; mudflats)</li> <li>▪ Lakes</li> <li>▪ Lowland calcareous grassland (e.g. species-rich chalk and limestone grasslands) No Suffolk plan at present</li> <li>▪ Lowland dry acid grassland (see combined Suffolk plan for Heathland)</li> <li>▪ Lowland Fen (e.g. fen, marsh &amp; swamp)</li> <li>▪ Lowland heathland (see combined Suffolk plan for Heathland)</li> <li>▪ Lowland meadows (e.g. species-rich flower meadows) (Suffolk plan is lowland hay meadows)</li> <li>▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (ancient woodland)</li> <li>▪ Maritime cliff and slopes</li> <li>▪ Mixed deciduous woodland</li> <li>▪ Mud habitats in deep water</li> <li>▪ Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land</li> <li>▪ Ponds</li> <li>▪ Reedbeds</li> <li>▪ Rivers &amp; streams</li> <li>▪ Saline lagoons</li> <li>▪ Seagrass beds</li> <li>▪ Sheltered muddy gravels</li> <li>▪ Sub tidal sands and gravels</li> <li>▪ Traditional orchards</li> <li>▪ Wet woodland</li> <li>▪ Wood-pasture and parkland</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. OTHER BIODIVERSITY FEATURES</b></p> <p>These may also be a material consideration if identified by the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership see paragraph 84 ODPM Circular 06/2005); such features may include: and Mature/Veteran Trees, Caves and disused tunnels and mines (e.g. roosts for bats), Trees and scrub used for nesting by breeding birds; Previously developed land with biodiversity interest, Urban green space (e.g. parks, allotments, school grounds and railway embankments) and other habitats and features identified in the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan (<a href="http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org.uk">www.suffolkbiodiversity.org.uk</a>).</p>	



***Exceptions When a Full Survey and Assessment May Not Be Required***

*International and National Sites:* A survey and assessment will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with Natural England, where the latter confirms in writing that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any statutory sites designated for their national or international importance.

*Regional and Local Sites and Priority Habitats:* A survey and assessment will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with the Local Planning Authority's ecologist (where employed), or ecological advisor and/or the Suffolk Wildlife Trust that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any regional or local sites designated for their local nature conservation importance or any other priority habitats or listed features

**TABLE 3**

**Local Requirements For Designated Geodiversity Sites And Features  
Criteria (Trigger List) for when a Survey and Assessment are Required**

<p><b>1. DESIGNATED SITES</b> (as shown on the Council's Development Plan Proposals Map) See Earth Heritage Suffolk Handbook Part 2 Protecting Our Geodiversity p S1 and S2</p>	
<p><b>Nationally designated sites</b></p>	<p>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) National Nature Reserves (NNRs)</p>
<p><b>Regionally and locally designated sites</b></p>	<p>Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) Public County Geosites/Local Geodiversity Sites as in Earth Heritage Suffolk Part 6 Gazetteer p G1 – G8</p>
<p><b>2. OTHER GEODIVERSITY CONSERVATION FEATURES</b> See Earth Heritage Suffolk Handbook</p>	
<p><b>Natural</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coasts and estuaries – cliffs, beaches, salt marshes, processes</li> <li>▪ Rivers and streams – valleys, channels, interfluves, processes</li> <li>▪ Groundwater – springs, seepages, solution features, processes</li> <li>▪ Relic landforms – terraces, periglacial patterned ground, palaeosols, etc.</li> <li>▪ Buried interest – geological deposits including fossils and former lake beds</li> </ul>
<p><b>Man Made</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quarries and pits – active and disused</li> <li>▪ Road and rail cuttings</li> <li>▪ Underground features – wells, tunnels, etc.</li> <li>▪ Built environment, including building stone, decorative stone, artificial stone</li> <li>▪ Large stones – sea defences, erratics and sarsens (as features), etc.</li> <li>▪ Works of art, memorials, street and pub etc. signs.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unavailable sites – landfill, major engineering sites, etc.</li> </ul>

**Exceptions When a Full Survey and Assessment May Not Be Required**

*International and National Sites:* A survey and report will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with Natural England, where the latter confirms in writing that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any statutory sites designated for their national importance.

*Regional and Local Sites:* A survey and report will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with appropriate local geological specialists (such as GeoSuffolk) that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any regional or local sites designated for their geodiversity conservation importance.

## Appendix B ECOLOGICAL SURVEY SEASONS

Key: Optimal Survey Time  Extending into

The survey calendar below broadly indicates appropriate survey periods – for further details, reference should be made to published guidance and mitigation guidance documents listed below.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Badgers												
Bats (Hibernation Roosts)												
Bats (Summer Roosts)												
Bats (Foraging/Commuting)												
Birds (Breeding)												
BIRDS (Over Wintering)												
Dormice												
Great-Crested Newts TERRESTRIAL												
AQUATIC												
Invertebrates												
Amphibians												
Otters												
Reptiles												
Water Voles												
White-Clawed Crayfish												
Habitats/Vegetation												

Points to note regarding surveys are as follows:

- It is important that surveys for protected (and priority) species are carried out at an appropriate time of year, as indicated by published guidance and/or nationally recognised survey guidelines/methods where available. This is so that there is the greatest chance of detecting protected (and priority) species if present. At other times of year, it can be very difficult to detect protected (and priority) species as their levels of activity decrease as temperatures decline and the weather worsens, they take refuge in areas that are difficult to access and bad weather destroys evidence of their presence. Therefore, surveys undertaken at an inappropriate time of year will not provide a true reflection of the likely impacts of a proposed development on protected (and priority) species.
- For certain species and habitats surveys can be carried out at any time of year, but for other species, particular times of year are required to give the most reliable results, as indicated above.
- Surveys conducted outside of optimal times will be unreliable. As a consequence, there may be insufficient information for determination of an application. For certain species (e.g. Great Crested Newt) surveys over the winter period are unlikely to yield any useful information. Similarly negative results gained outside the optimal period should not be interpreted as absence of a species and further survey work may be required during the optimal survey season. This is especially important where existing surveys and records show the species has been found previously on site or in the surrounding area.
- Species surveys are also very weather dependent so it may be necessary to delay a survey or to carry out more than one survey if the weather is not suitable, e.g. heavy rain is not good for surveying for otters, as it washes away their spraint (droppings). Likewise bat surveys carried out in wet or cold weather may not yield accurate results.
- Absence of evidence of a species does not necessarily mean that the species is not there, nor that its habitat is not protected (e.g. a bat roost is protected whether any bats are present or not).
- Suffolk Biological Records Centre may have useful existing information and records ([www.suffolkbrc.org.uk](http://www.suffolkbrc.org.uk))

## Published Survey and Mitigation Guidance

Competent ecologists should carry out any surveys & assessments. Where surveys involve disturbance, capture or handling of a protected species, then only a person licensed by Natural England can undertake such surveys. Surveys should follow published national or local methodologies set out below. Further details may be found on the following web sites:

Biodiversity Planning Toolkit at: [www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com](http://www.biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com) – one stop shop for planning and biodiversity

IEEM at: [www.ieem.org.uk/Publications.htm](http://www.ieem.org.uk/Publications.htm) - Guidelines for Survey Methodology)

Natural England: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/9001>

The following is a list of published guidance on protected species which gives information on survey methodologies, assessment of impacts, and mitigation measures.

### **Bats**

Bat Conservation Trust (2007). *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines*. London: Bat Conservation Trust.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. Peterborough: English Nature.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & Mcleish, A.P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual*. Peterborough: JNCC.

Schofield, H.W. (2008). *The Lesser Horseshoe Bat Conservation Handbook*. Ledbury: The Vincent Wildlife Trust.

### **Great Crested Newts**

English Nature (2001). *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. Peterborough: English Nature.

Langton, T., Beckett, C. & Foster, J.(2001). *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*. Halesworth: Froglife.

### **Domice**

Bright, P., Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2006). *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* Peterborough: English Nature.

### **Otters**

Countryside Council for Wales (2009). *Otters: A Guide for Developers*. Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales.

Scottish Natural Heritage (2008). *Otters and development*: <http://www.snh.org.uk/publications/on-line/wildlife/otters/biology.asp>

Chanin, P. (2003). *Ecology of the European Otter. Conserving Natura 2000. Rivers Ecology Series No. 10*. English Nature, Peterborough.

LIFE publications on otters available to download from: [www.english-nature.org.uk/lifeinukrivers/species/otter.html](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/lifeinukrivers/species/otter.html)

### **Water Voles**

Strachan, R. & Moorhouse, T. (2006). *Water Vole Conservation Handbook 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* Oxon: The Wildlife Conservation Research Unit.

Welsh Assembly Government & Countryside Council for Wales (2009). *Water Voles and Development*. Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales.

### **Badgers**

Countryside Council for Wales (2005). *Badgers: A Guide for Developers*. Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales.

RSPCA (1994). *Problems with Badgers?* Horsham, Sussex: RSPCA.

### **Barn Owls**

Barn Owl Trust (2002). *Barn Owls on site: A guide for developers and planners*. Peterborough: English Nature.

Countryside Council for Wales (2005). *Owls in Wales*. Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (2007). *Wild Birds and the Law England and Wales: A Plain Guide to Bird Protection Today*. Sandy, Bedfordshire: RSPB.

### **White-clawed crayfish**

Peay, S. (2000). *Guidance on works affecting White-clawed crayfish*. Peterborough: English Nature & Leeds: Environment Agency.

Holdich, D. (2003). *Ecology of the White-clawed Crayfish. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Ecology Series No.1*. Peterborough: English Nature.

### **Reptiles**

English Nature (2004). *Reptiles: guidelines for developers*. Peterborough: English Nature.

Gent, T. & Gibson, S. (1998) *Herpetofauna Worker's Manual*. Peterborough: JNCC.

Countryside Council for Wales (2001). *Reptiles in Wales*. Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales.

### **Phase 1 Survey**

Nature Conservancy Council (1990). *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey*. Peterborough: JNCC

## Recommended Survey and Assessment Template for Protected Species

As a guide to what constitutes sufficient information for the planning authority, any submitted survey and report should be based on the following:

### 1. Executive summary (no more than one side of A4)

### 2. Introduction

- a. Background to development - *justification for why the proposal is necessary*
- b. Description of the proposed works; e.g. *building conversion, new build, demolition etc.*
- c. Summary of statutory provisions for protected species

### 3. Survey and Site Assessment

- a. Qualifications and experience/competence of surveyor(s) e.g. *details of EPS license number etc. and equipment used (type of bat detectors and data loggers)*
- b. Scale plan/map and 6 or 8 figure grid reference
- c. Desk top data trawl – *details of information sought and obtained from local records centre*
- d. Conclusions of walkover survey
- e. Objectives of the detailed survey
- f. Field surveys - *details of internal/external inspections, emergence/re-entry surveys, transect surveys, timings (day/evening), dates, weather conditions (wind, rain, temperature tabulated for multiple survey visits)*
- g. Survey results – *including: text, tables, photos, maps, illustrations, plans (with raw data appended including sonograms)*
- h. Site/habitat - *description of features of value to commuting, foraging and roosting bats*
- i. Interpretation/evaluation of results – *estimate of bat numbers and status of site; e.g. presence of hibernation, maternity, feeding roosts, swarming sites and their significance locally / regionally.*

### 4. Impact Assessment

- a. Short term disturbance impacts
- b. Long term impacts
  - i. Roost modification
  - ii. Roost loss
  - iii. Fragmentation and isolation of habitat
- c. Post development interference impacts e.g. lighting / use of loft space
- d. Predicted scale of impacts
- e. Land ownership and viability for any proposed mitigation sites

**Note:** A submitted report must first demonstrate that alternatives have been considered and show why avoidance of negative impacts is not feasible before providing a strategy that details mitigation and compensation proposals.

### 5. Measures for Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancement

- a. Full mitigation, compensation and enhancement plan / strategy
- b. Works to be undertaken by an ecologist or suitably qualified person
  - i. Capture and exclusion (as an example of possible works)
- c. Works to be undertaken by the developer /landowner
  - i. In-situ retention of bat roost
  - ii. Modification of existing roosts
  - iii. New roost creation
  - iv. Scaled maps/plans

### 6. Compliance With Development Plan Policies And Statutory Obligations

- a. How biodiversity features will change with development – *a prediction of net loss or gain*
- b. How the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policies within the development plan
- c. Likelihood of obtaining any necessary Regulation 44 European Protected Species licences

### 7. Post-development site safeguard

- a. Habitat/site management and maintenance where necessary
- b. Population monitoring, roost usage etc.
- c. Mechanism for ensuring delivery – *planning conditions/obligations and/or Reg. 44 licence*

### 8. Timetable of works

Evidence that conservation proposals are compatible with the proposed development timetable