

Biodiversity Self-Assessment Form

Householder Applications

Planning reference (for office use):

Site address:

Laburnum, 5 St James Court, Stonesfield, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX29 8QW

There are many legally protected sites of nature conservation importance and non-statutory local wildlife sites (see Note 1), priority habitats (see Note 3) and a wide range of legally protected, notable and priority species (see Note 6) in the District. Developments can adversely affect these and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are legally required by the Government to consider the conservation of biodiversity when determining a planning application.

Government planning policies for biodiversity are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), while the LPA's local plan will set out how they address these requirements in local policy terms. The LPA needs to be able to understand what the potential impacts of the development might be and if there are impacts on biodiversity, how these will be avoided, mitigated, or compensated.

This self-assessment will help you work out if your proposal is likely to affect biodiversity, what additional information you will need to provide to support your application and how to get that information for householder applications.

If you require additional advice, please download a copy of the council's Planning Validation Biodiversity Guidance for Householder Applications.

Types of Biodiversity Report

If your answers to the questions in **Sections 1** and/or **2** identify that your project may potentially have an adverse impact on designated sites, priority or other notable habitats or legally protected or notable species you will need to submit a biodiversity report that demonstrates at least the following information:

- Description of the sites, species, habitats or features that could be affected (such as location, size, abundance, importance);
- Likely impacts of your development on habitats, sites or species (*this will depend on the exact nature of your proposal*);
- How alternative designs and locations have been considered;
- How adverse impacts will be avoided;
- How any unavoidable impacts will be mitigated or reduced (*see Note 4*);
- How impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated will be compensated (*see Note 4*); and
- Full details of biodiversity enhancements that will be provided.

In most householder applications, it is likely that a **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal** (PEA) report would be sufficient. This comprises a scoping assessment to identify important biodiversity features, further surveys and biodiversity enhancement opportunities. It is not usually suitable for submission with a planning application unless no additional surveys are required, no significant impacts would arise and no mitigation is necessary (other than precautionary working methods). The report must be prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidance-on-preliminary-ecological-appraisal-gpea/>

However, where more detailed surveys are necessary, an **Ecological Impact Assessment** (EclA) report would be required. This would collate the results from the individual habitat and species surveys, assess the impacts of the proposal and propose mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures. This report must be prepared in accordance with CIEEM guidelines: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/>

Where more targeted and specific reports are necessary (for example bat surveys), these must:

- Be undertaken by a competent, i.e. an appropriately qualified and/or experienced), person
- Be of appropriate scope and detail (i.e. using best practice guidance)
- Be conducted at an appropriate time of year, in suitable weather conditions and using recognised methodologies (e.g. Bat Survey Good Practice Guidelines, 2016).

Reports may not be required where applicants are able to provide pre-application correspondence from Natural England, the Local Authority or their ecological adviser that confirms that they are satisfied that the proposal will not have an adverse impact on any features identified in Sections 1 or 2.

The application may not be validated if any of the information submitted proves to be inadequate or inaccurate. If validated and the information is subsequently found not to fully address any potential impacts then further information may be required during the course of any planning application, for instance if any of the information you have provided needs clarification, or if other potential impacts are identified. If sufficient information on ecological issues is not provided by the time the application needs to be determined, the application may be invalidated or refused.

It is strongly advised that you consider biodiversity at the **earliest** possible stage in your project as there are seasonal constraints to much of the survey work that may be needed to support your application.

Please consult the CIEEM Registered Practices directory at <https://cieem.net/i-need/finding-a-consultant/> for assistance in finding an ecological consultant to advise you and carry out the necessary surveys and assessments.

Householder Self-Assessment Form

To be completed by the Applicant

| | |
|---|----------|
| Has this checklist been completed or checked by a suitably qualified/experienced ecologist? | Yes / No |
|---|----------|

SECTION 1 – Sites and Habitats

| PROPOSAL DETAILS | | Y | N | |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| Please answer all questions Yes or No by marking the appropriate box against each question | | | | <p>If you have answered 'YES' to any of these, is it likely that the development would have an impact on the identified site? (<i>see Note 2</i>)</p> <p>Please explain why/why not, or state if further information is provided (see below*)</p> |
| Legally Protected Sites for Nature Conservation | | | | |
| 1.1 | Is the application site on or within 50m of a SSSI, SAC, SPA or Ramsar site? (<i>see Note 1</i>) | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Habitats and Locally Designated Sites | | | | |
| 1.2 | <p>Are any of the following present on or within 50m of the application site?</p> <p>NB: <i>If Yes, there may be a Local Wildlife Site (see Note 1), Priority Habitat or other important feature within or adjacent to the application site – please see Note 3 for further information on identifying these.</i></p> | | | |
| a) | Local Wildlife Site | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| b) | Estuary or saltmarsh | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| c) | Wetlands or marshes | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| d) | Water courses (rivers or streams) | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| e) | Lakes or ponds | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| f) | Heathland | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| g) | Mixed / Broad-leaved woodland | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| h) | Veteran (particularly old/large) trees | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| i) | Hedgerows | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| j) | Flower-rich meadow/grassland | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| k) | Traditional or Old Orchard | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |

| | | | | |
|----|--|--|---|--|
| l) | Mosaic habitats on previously developed land | | ✓ | |
|----|--|--|---|--|

**This may simply be a brief explanation in the box provided within the table, for example stating that the identified feature is outside the development footprint/boundaries, or a biodiversity report has been submitted. Please note that the submitted information will be reviewed by the Local Planning Authority and you may be asked for further clarification if necessary either prior to validation or during the application process.*

SECTION 2 – Species, including priority species (see Note 6)

| Please answer all questions yes (Y) or no (N) by marking the appropriate box against each question. | | Y | N | Species / Issue | Survey carried out and relevant report submitted attached (reference)? |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| 2.1 | Would the proposed works affect <u>existing</u> buildings with any of the following: (see Note 2) | | | | |
| a) | Hanging tiles (see note 5), timber cladding/weatherboarding, roof voids where the building is within 200m of woodland, hedgerow network or water | | ✓ | Bats and bat roosts Breeding birds Barn owls | |
| b) | Buildings or structures within 200m of woodland, hedgerow network and/or water | | ✓ | | |
| c) | Pre-1914 buildings or structures within 400m of woodland, hedgerow network and/or water | | ✓ | | |
| d) | Pre-1914 buildings with gable ends, traditional clay tile roofs or slate roofs, hanging tiles or weatherboarding regardless of location | | ✓ | | |
| e) | Any structure with open flying access within 200m of woodland, hedgerow network or water | | ✓ | | |
| f) | Any structure with gaps around roof structures such as flashing, ridge tiles, fascia and soffit boards within 200m of woodland, hedgerow network or water | | ✓ | | |
| g) | Structures where there is known current or historic bat use | | ✓ | | |
| h) | Cellar, ice-house or other stone-built structure | | ✓ | | Bats |
| 2.2 | Would the proposal affect trees with ANY of the following features? (see note 2) | | | | |
| a) | Old and veteran trees | | ✓ | Bats and bat roosts Breeding birds Invertebrates | |
| b) | Trees with obvious holes, cracks, cavities or heavy vegetation (e.g. ivy) | | ✓ | | |
| c) | Trees with a circumference greater than 1m at chest height | | ✓ | | |
| 2.3 | Are there streams, rivers or lakes on or within 10m of the application site that would be affected (including their banks and adjacent habitat) by the development? | | ✓ | Bats – foraging habitat Otter Water vole | |

| | | | | | |
|------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | White-clawed crayfish Breeding birds | |
| 2.4 | Would the proposals affect (see note 2) any of the following features? | | | | |
| a) | Deciduous (i.e. not mainly conifer) woodland? | | ✓ | Bat foraging habitat Dormice Breeding birds Badger | |
| b) | Field hedgerows over 1m tall and over 0.5m thick? | | ✓ | | |
| c) | Areas of scrub well-connected to woodland or hedgerows? | | ✓ | | |
| 2.5 | Do the proposed works (see Note 2): | | | | |
| a) | Take place within 50m of any pond and within the red or amber zones of the district level licensing scheme's modelled map (NatureSpace) https://naturespaceuk.com/gismaps/impact-risk-map/ | | ✓ | Amphibians – particularly great crested newts and common toads | |
| b) | Damage or destroy a pond or habitat within close proximity to a pond (c. 10m)? | | ✓ | | |
| c) | Affect suitable habitat: refuges (e.g. log piles or rubble) grassland, scrub woodlands or hedgerows OR is connected to the pond by grassland, hedgerows etc? | | ✓ | | |
| 2.6 | Would the proposal affect mature/overgrown gardens over 0.1ha, or any rough grassland, meadow, orchard derelict/brownfield land, railway land or allotments? (see note 2) | | | ✓ | Reptiles Breeding birds Hedgehogs |
| 2.7 | Does the proposal involve flood lighting or a significant increase in external lighting? | | | ✓ | Bats |
| 2.8 | Is the proposal for a wind turbine? | | | ✓ | Bats Birds |

NOTES

Note 1: You can find out if your application site is on or near any of these sites from www.natureonthemap.org.uk, www.magic.gov.uk. The Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) or the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) can provide detailed maps showing boundaries of all site designations and priority habitats.

SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest (designated and protected under UK law); SAC = Special Area of Conservation; SPA = Special Protection Area (these are designated and protected under EU law and are also SSSIs); Ramsar site = internationally important wetland, designated under the Ramsar Convention – these will also be SPAs / SACs and SSSI.

Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks to SSSI posed by development proposals. They define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts. The SSSI IRZ Dataset can be downloaded from the [Natural England Open Data Geoportal](https://naturalengland-open-data-geoportal.com/). It is also available to view on www.magic.gov.uk

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are not legally protected, but are identified in the Local Plan as being of importance for biodiversity and are considered during the planning process.

Note 2: Impacts can be direct such as destruction, removal or modification, or indirect through disturbance such as run-off, noise, dust, lighting or increased recreational use. The impact risk mapping for GCN is available at <https://naturespaceuk.com/gismaps/impact-risk-map/>.

Note 3: Areas of designated Ancient Woodland and some Priority Habitats can be found on www.magic.gov.uk. The LPA's Local Plan Proposals Map for your local planning authority may identify the location of any Local Wildlife Sites. A biodiversity data

search from the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) or the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) should be obtained if necessary - refer to biodiversity guidance.

Priority Habitat – natural or semi-natural habitats that have been identified as being at risk (i.e. they are rare or in decline) or that are important for certain key species of plant or animal; previously known as UK BAP priority habitats, these are now referred to as Habitats of Principal Importance for Biodiversity (as defined in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); see <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-habitats/#list-of-uk-bap-priority-habitats>

Note 4: Avoidance (measures taken to avoid impacts) should be the first considerations; mitigation (measures which make unavoidable impacts less severe); compensation (measures which counterbalance remaining impacts, resulting in an overall net loss of biodiversity). NB ‘Mitigation’ as a general term, or a ‘mitigation strategy’ is often used to cover all these processes; and then in addition to this, enhancement measures to provide a gain in biodiversity.

Note 5 (re. hanging tiles): This checklist, where relating to potential impacts on **bats**, is adapted from the Bat Conservation Trust’s guidelines (see <http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/guidanceforprofessionals.html>) on where bats might reasonably be likely to be found. However, bats can be found in other locations, types or areas of buildings. It is particularly important to note that where a building has **hanging tiles** but is not within 200m of woodland or water, there is still potentially a reasonable likelihood of bats being present and a survey may be required in situations other than those specifically identified in the BIC.

Note 6: Priority species - Species that have been identified as being at risk (i.e. they are rare or in decline) or important for certain key species of plant or animal; previously referred to as UK BAP priority species, these are now known as “Species of Principal Importance for Biodiversity Conservation” under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as listed at <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-species/#uk-bap-priority-species-list>

The Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) or the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) hold data on the known locations of millions of protected, notable and priority species. However, the absence of a record does not necessarily mean that the species is absent from an area – it is entirely dependent on recording effort.

Important: this checklist cannot include all protected species and all circumstances where they may be affected. Legislation relating to protected species applies in all circumstances and it is the responsibility of the developer to ensure that protected species and habitats are not impacted as a result of development. If protected species are found during the course of development, work must stop and advice sought from a competent (suitably qualified and/or experienced) ecologist and/or Natural England on any special precautions before continuing, including the need for a derogation licence.

For office use only – to be completed by the Validation Team:

| | | | | |
|----------|---|-------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Have ALL questions on ALL sections been completed? | Y / N | If Yes, go to 2 | If NO, application should not be validated |
| 2 | Have any questions been answered ‘Yes’? | Y / N | If YES, go to 3 | If NO, application can be validated |
| 3 | Does the applicant’s completed checklist conclude that, although there may be some biodiversity-related issues, no impacts are likely to occur and no mitigation is required? | Y / N | If YES, application can be validated | If NO, go to 4 |
| 4 | Has an appropriate biodiversity report* been submitted to address all the potential impacts and recommend mitigation and enhancement measures? | Y / N | If YES, application can be validated | If NO, application should not be validated |

*Note: Appropriate reports are: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (where no further surveys or only precautionary mitigation measures are required) or Ecological Impact Assessment in most cases.