

# Biodiversity Self-Assessment Form for Full Planning Applications

Planning reference (for office use):

Site address:

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.

This form must be completed and submitted with planning applications. Please note - there is a separate self-assessment form available for householder applications and all major development proposals must be submitted with an Ecological Impact Assessment (a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal may be acceptable where no further surveys or only precautionary mitigation measures are required).

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

## Types of Biodiversity Report

If your answers to the questions in **Sections 1** and/or **2** identify that your proposal may potentially have an adverse impact on designated sites, priority or other notable habitats or legally protected or notable/priority species you must submit either a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal or an Ecological Impact Assessment report, which demonstrates at least the following information:

- Description of the sites, species, habitats and/or other features that could be affected (such as location, size, abundance, importance);
- Likely impacts of your development on habitats, sites or species;
- 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
- What biodiversity enhancements (or a measured net gain) will be provided.

A **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal** (PEA) report 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/>

An **Ecological Impact Assessment** (EcIA) report collates the results from the individual habitat and species surveys, assesses the impacts of the proposal and proposes mitigation, compensation and enhancements. Suitable for submission in most cases. This report must be prepared in accordance with the CIEEM guidelines:

<https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/>

Where individual targeted and specific habitat and/or species surveys are necessary, these must:

- Be undertaken by a competent (i.e. 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, during suitable weather conditions and using recognised methodologies e.g. Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines.

**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 is not provided by the time the application needs to be determined, the application may be refused. This can include cases where the information provided (i.e. surveys and data searches) is considered to be out of date.

It is strongly advised that you consider biodiversity at the **earliest** possible stage in designing your proposal, 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.

# Biodiversity Self-Assessment Form

## To be completed by the Applicant

Has this checklist been completed or checked by a suitably qualified/experienced ecologist?	Yes / No
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## SECTION 1 – Sites and Habitats

PROPOSAL DETAILS		Y	N	If you have answered 'YES' to any of these, is it likely that the development would have an impact on the identified site? (see Note 2)  Please explain why/why not, or state if further information is provided (see below*)
Please answer all questions <b>Yes (Y)</b> or <b>No (N)</b> by marking the appropriate box against each question.				
<b>Legally Protected Sites for Nature Conservation</b>				
1.1	Is the application site on, adjacent to or within 200m of a SSSI, SAC, SPA or Ramsar site? (see Note 1)		N	
1.2	Is the application for residential or tourism development within the zone of influence (8km) of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC?  <i>Note: if yes, the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Mitigation Strategy must be applied or a bespoke mitigation strategy put forward to compensate for recreational impacts.</i>		N	
1.3	Is the application for residential or tourism development within the zone of influence (15.4km) of the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC?  <i>Note: if yes, the HRA Mitigation Strategy must be applied or a bespoke mitigation strategy put forward to compensate for recreational impacts.</i>		N	
1.4	Is the application for residential or tourism development within the zone of influence (6.2km) (NB: zone of influence may be subject to change) of the Severn Estuary SPA, SAC and Ramsar?  <i>Note: if yes, the HRA Mitigation Strategy must be applied or a bespoke mitigation strategy put forward to compensate for recreational impacts.</i>		N	
1.5	Is the application located within a sensitive location for horseshoe bats in the Forest of Dean District Council area?		N	

	<a href="https://www.fdean.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/wv-fod-bat-sac-development-management-survey-and-assessment-guidance-vr-july-2021.pdf">wv-fod-bat-sac-development-management-survey-and-assessment-guidance-vr-july-2021.pdf</a> ( <a href="https://www.fdean.gov.uk">fdean.gov.uk</a> )			
1.6	Is the site within an SSSI impact risk zone (IRZ) and does it correspond to any of the development types listed in the results?  <b>Note:</b> if yes, the LPA would need to consult Natural England.		N	
<b>Habitats and locally designated sites</b>				
1.6	Are any of the following present on or within 100m of the application site?  <b>NB:</b> 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).			
a)	Local Wildlife Site		N	
b)	Estuary or saltmarsh		N	
c)	Wetlands or marshes		N	
d)	Watercourses (rivers or streams)		N	
e)	Lakes or ponds	Y		
f)	Heathland		N	
g)	Mixed / broadleaved woodland	Y		
h)	Veteran (particularly old/large) trees		N	
i)	Hedgerows	Y		
j)	Flower-rich meadow / species-rich grassland		N	
k)	Traditional or Old Orchard		N	
l)	Mosaic habitats on previously developed land		N	
m)	Arable field margins supporting assemblages of rare arable plants		N	

\* 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 (reference)?
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Would the proposed works affect <u>existing</u> buildings with any of the following features: (see Note 2)</b>				
a)	Hanging tiles (see Note 5), timber cladding or weatherboarding, roof voids where the building is within 200m of woodland, hedgerow networks or water		N	Bats and bat roosts Breeding birds Barn owls	
b)	Buildings or structures within 200m of woodland, hedgerow networks, and/or water	Y			
c)	Pre-1914 buildings or structures within 400m of woodland, hedgerow networks and/or water	Y			
d)	Pre-1914 buildings with gable ends, traditional clay tile roofs or slate roofs, hanging tiles or weatherboarding regardless of location		N		
e)	Any structure with open flying access within 200m of woodland, hedgerow network, or water	Y			
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	Y			
g)	Structures where there is known current or historic bat use		N		
h)	Agricultural buildings, particularly of traditional brick or stone construction and with/or with exposed wooden beams greater than 20cm thick		N	Bats Barn owls Swallows Other breeding birds	
i)	Tunnels, mines, kilns, ice houses, adits, military fortifications, air raid shelters, cellars or similar underground ducts and structures		N	Bats	
j)	Bridge structures, especially over water or wet ground		N	Bats Breeding birds Otter Water vole	
k)	Gravel pits, quarries or natural cliff faces and rock outcrops with crevices, caves or swallets		N	Bats Breeding birds Reptiles	
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Would the proposal affect trees with any of the following features? (see Note 2)</b>				
a)	Old and veteran trees		N	Bats and bat roosts Breeding birds Invertebrates	
b)	Trees with obvious holes, cracks, cavities or dense vegetation (e.g. ivy)		N		
c)	Trees with a circumference greater than 1m at chest height		N		

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 (reference)?
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 proposals?		N	Bat foraging habitat Otter Water vole White-clawed crayfish Breeding birds Over-wintering birds	
2.4	<b>Would the proposals have an impact (see Note 2) on any of the following features?</b>				
a)	Deciduous (i.e. not mainly conifer) woodland?		N	Bat foraging habitat	
b)	Field hedgerows over 1m tall and over 0.5m thick?		N	Dormice Breeding birds	
c)	Areas of scrub well-connected to woodland or hedgerows?		N	Badger	
2.5	<b>Does the proposal (see Note 2):</b>				
a)	Take place within 500m of any pond (major development) or 250m of a pond (minor development) and within the red, amber, green zones of the district level licensing scheme's modelled map (NatureSpace)? <a href="https://naturespaceuk.com/gismaps/impact-risk-map/">https://naturespaceuk.com/gismaps/impact-risk-map/</a> .	Y		Amphibians - particularly great crested newts and common toads	
b)	Affect an area of land 0.01ha (100m <sup>2</sup> ) or greater within 100m of a pond?	Y			
c)	Affect an area of land 1ha or greater be affected within 500m of a pond?		N		
d)	Damage or destroy a pond or located within 50m of a pond?	Y			
e)	Affect suitable habitat: refuges (e.g. log piles or rubble) grassland, scrub woodlands or hedgerows OR is connected to the pond by grassland, hedgerows, scrub, woodland, ditches?		N		
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)?	Y		Reptiles Breeding birds Hedgehogs	
2.7	Is the proposal for a wind turbine?		N	Bat Birds, including migratory	
2.8	Does the proposal involve lighting of churches, listed buildings or flood lighting of green space within 50 metres of woodland, water, hedgerows or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water?		N	Bats Barn owls Breeding birds	

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 (reference)?
2.9	Is the proposal for a solar farm? (see Note 7)		N	Rare arable plants Badger Dormouse Reptiles Amphibians Breeding birds including ground-nesting 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](http://www.natureonthemap.org.uk), [www.magic.gov.uk](http://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). It is also available to view on [www.magic.gov.uk](http://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/qismaps/impact-risk-map/>.

**Note 3:** Areas of designated Ancient Woodland and some Priority Habitats can be found on [www.magic.gov.uk](http://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 Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) should be obtained to inform all biodiversity reports - refer to biodiversity guidance.

Priority Habitats are 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, they 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.

**Note 7: Solar Parks and maximising ‘environmental gain’** - solar parks or farms represent a unique opportunity to increase biodiversity and provide a range of environmental benefits, as well as being a renewable energy resource. Applicants should consider using the ‘Solar Park Impacts on Ecosystem Services’ (SPIES) web-based decision support tool to compare different management actions and their impact on ecosystem services. This is useful in terms of maximising natural capital benefits (i.e. wider environmental gain). Website: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/spies/>

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

<b>1</b>	Have <b>ALL</b> questions on <b>ALL</b> sections been completed?	Y / N	If Yes, go to 2	If NO, application should not be validated
<b>2</b>	Have any questions been answered ‘Yes’?	Y / N	If YES, go to 3	If NO, application can be validated
<b>3</b>	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
<b>4</b>	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.