

# Ecology and Trees Checklist

This checklist is required for all planning applications. Understanding the ecology on site and taking action can avoid delays in planning, create a better-quality scheme and avoid criminal prosecution.

## 1. Development / Building works

Does the proposal include works to any of the following existing features?	Yes	No
Agricultural buildings (farmhouses or barns)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Derelict or dilapidated buildings in a rural location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A pre-1960s building in or within 200m of woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A pre-1914 building in or within 400m of woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Underground structures (such as cellars or tunnels)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bridge structures, aqueducts or viaducts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An existing roof or over-hanging eaves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hanging tiles or timber weather boarding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dense climbing plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Holes, gaps or crevices small enough for a thumb	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 2. Trees and hedges (see [further information](#) section 11 for guidance)

Are any of the following features within or near the red line site?	Yes	No
Trees with a stem wider than 75mm (measured 1.5m above ground level) on the site or within 15m of the site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hedgerows on or within 5m of the site ( <a href="#">see 6.3</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fruit or nut trees within the site ( <a href="#">see 6.3</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 3. Habitats (see [further information](#) section 12 for guidance)

Are any of the following habitats within or near the red line site?	Yes	No
Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation within 2km	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 500m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) within 100m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Within or adjacent to a Local Wildlife Site or a Biological Notification Site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Within or adjacent to a priority habitat / habitat of principle importance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Meadows or unmanaged, dense ground vegetation within site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ponds within 250m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rivers, streams or water filled ditches within 100m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 4. Known wildlife (see [further information](#) section 13 for guidance)

Have any of the following species been known to use the red line site?		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nesting birds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dormice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Otters
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bats	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Great Crested Newts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water Voles
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Badgers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reptiles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> White-clawed Crayfish

## What to do if you answered Yes

### 5. Overview

- 5.1 To avoid delays, we strongly advise using our [Planning Advice Service](#).
- 5.2 To fully address any ecology issues on your site, you must follow this three-stage process:
- I. Survey and Assessment (to understand and assess the ecology / trees of the area)
  - II. Design (to minimise, mitigate and compensate impacts and maximise benefits)
  - III. Implementation (ensure that the agreed protection and enhancement takes place)

### 6. What must do I do now?

- 6.1 If you answered yes in sections 1, 3 or 4, you must submit an **ecology report** from a suitably qualified person. The report is likely to be a preliminary ecological appraisal as detailed below.
- 6.2 If you answered yes in section 2, you must submit a **tree report** from a suitably qualified person.
- 6.3 If you answered yes in section 2 to 'fruit or nut trees' or 'hedgerows' you must submit **BOTH** a tree report and an ecology report from a suitably qualified person.

### 7. Ecology report

- 7.1 The best ecology report to submit is usually a [Preliminary Ecological Appraisal](#). This broad but shallow assessment usually includes:
- A desk study – including a search of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre's records
  - A walkover survey – identifying signs of species and habitats requiring further consideration
  - A phase 1 (or UK Habs) Habitat Survey – mapping the habitats on site
  - Recommendations – for further surveys or specific measures to avoid harming wildlife.
- 7.2 Any surveys must be carried out by a suitably qualified person. Some can only be carried out at certain times of the year, so we recommend you start researching this now. Professional ecologists can be found on the [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management](#) website.
- 7.3 Other types of ecology report may be more appropriate as the first step in some situations. An ecologist will be best placed to advise you further on this. Potential ecological impacts must be understood before you start the design phase.

### 8. Tree report

- 8.1 A Tree report must include the findings from of a tree survey. Surveys must be carried out by a suitably qualified person and must include the appropriate level of detail as set out in Table B.1 in BS5837:2012. Suitably qualified arboriculturists are often members of [the Arboricultural Association](#) or the [Institute of Chartered Foresters](#).

### 9. Design

- 9.1 The 'Mitigation Hierarchy' must be followed when managing potential impacts on wildlife:
- I. Avoid
  - II. Minimise
  - III. Mitigate
  - IV. Compensate

9.2 'Enhancements' for wildlife must be included in the design, ensuring a net gain in biodiversity.

**10. Implementation**

10.1 Proposals for how any impact on ecology will be managed are likely to become conditions on any planning permission.

## Further information

### 11. Additional guidance on Trees and Hedges

11.1 For guidance related to trees, see: [BS5837:2012](#) Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations. An Arboricultural Consultant can advise how this is applied.

11.2 For guidance relating to protected hedgerows see: [Countryside hedgerows: protection and management](#). See also further guidance on how countryside hedgerows should be surveyed: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hedgerow-survey-handbook>

### 12. Additional guidance on Habitats

12.1 Habitats have special ecological importance. For advice on habitats with the highest level of protection, check Natural England's guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-sites-and-areas-how-to-review-planning-applications>

12.2 For advice on Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, check Natural England's guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

12.3 Rivers and streams are important for wildlife and are given special consideration in WDC's planning policy. Useful advice for sites adjacent to the district's watercourses can be found here: <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/public/documents/Planning/Planning-policy/Topic-based/River-Wye-advice-note.pdf>

12.4 Using the interactive maps on <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> you can locate your site and view nationally designated sites for wildlife conservation and priority habitats.

12.5 Biological Notification Site details, Local Wildlife Site details and other ecology records are available from [Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre](#) (BMERC).

### 13. Additional guidance on Known Wildlife

13.1 The wildlife mentioned in this section of the checklist may be protected species. Check Natural England's guidance: [Protected species: how to review planning applications](#).

13.2 The [Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre](#) hold records for species and habitats. For a fee they can [search their database](#) and produce a report which provides the core to an ecological desk study of a site.

13.3 Some basic records are freely available on the internet, e.g. <https://nbnatlas.org/>

13.4 Great Crested Newts are often found in ponds in the district. Even if the pond is not on site it may need consideration. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre hold records of GCN.

### 14. Additional sources of information

14.1 Joint Nature Conservation Committee [advice on wildlife law](#).

14.2 Priority Habitats and Species lists as published in accordance with [s41 of the NERC Act](#).

14.3 General information on biodiversity in Buckinghamshire can be found in the [Biodiversity in Planning in Buckinghamshire](#) publication.