PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Proposed three-storey extension to northeast corner of existing hotel and single upward extension. New main entrance façade, exterior cladding and dressing and new fenestration to all windows. Associated works to include internal reconfiguration and repurposing to deliver rooftop restaurant and bar, new large restaurant and bar, new reception and overflow reception, seventeen additional bedrooms together with plant rooms, luggage storage and a new sub-station.

First Inn Venue Wimbledon Ltd Holiday Inn Express

200 High Street – Colliers Wood – SW19 2BH

Control Sheet	
Site Address	Holiday Inn Express – 200 High Street Colliers Wood SW19 2BH
Report Ref:	
Prepared by:	Aiden Dutton
Checked by:	Rita Smoldareva
Issue No.	1

Summary

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment was carried out at Holiday Inn, 200 High Street, Colliers Wood, London, SW19 2BH and the surrounding habitats during December 2024. The purpose was to check for any ecological issues which might affect proposed development works on site.

The proposal will renovate the existing building at Holiday Inn Express, 200 High Street Colliers Wood, London SW19 2BH, a 4-storey hotel with associated car parking area.

Below is a summary of recommendations are made following the survey findings. Further details concerning the recommendations are given in the main body of the report.

Ecological factor	**Summary of recommendations**
Badger setts	30m boundary from the proposed development was surveyed for any potential badger setts. No further surveys required.
Bat roosts	The survey found it unlikely that bats are roosting on site. As a result, no further surveying or mitigation for roosting bats is recommended.
Bat foraging and commuting routes	It is recommended that site lighting is designed to avoid increasing lightfall onto trees around the site which might be used by bats for foraging around. Lighting should be designed to avoid increased lightfall onto trees adjacent to the boundaries of the site, as additional lightfall may deter foraging bats and negatively impact other nocturnal wildlife.
Nesting birds	Some potential was identified; vegetation clearance or construction work should avoid the nesting season (March–August) or be preceded by an ecologist's inspection. Some introduced shrubs, primarily dominated by ivy and butterfly bush to the north of the site, as well as potted shrubs to the east, were recorded during the survey. While these introduced shrubs provide low ecological value, they may offer limited foraging and shelter opportunities for invertebrates and urban-adapted birds
Dormice	No further surveys required.
Great crested newts	No further surveys required.
Reptiles	No further surveys required.
Other protected species	No further surveys required.
NERC Section 41 Species of Principal Importance	General advice: Any large excavations must be covered to avoid small mammals and other species potentially being trapped overnight. Do not disturb any deadwood that might be found along the western boundary.
Invasive Species	No further surveys required.
Protected Sites	The proposed development is unlikely to cause any significant long term negative impact on the adjacent Wandle Park SINC. Implementation of an Ecological Construction Management Plan (ECMP) to ensure best practices in biodiversity protection and enhancement is advised.

Habitats of Principal Importance	Considering the direct adjacency of the development site to the Wandle Park SINC (including 0.41 ha of priority deciduous woodland), implementing an ECMP is essential to safeguarding the ecological integrity of the habitats of principal importance. The outlined best practices will help mitigate potential impacts and ensure compliance with conservation obligations.

Opportunities for ecological enhancements should be considered to align with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) principles. The following measures are recommended:

- Planting two small trees to contribute to biodiversity net gain, as identified in the Biodiversity Impact Calculation Report.

- Installing bird nest boxes on buildings or nearby trees to support urban bird populations.

- Incorporating bat bricks into building structures to create roosting opportunities.

- Implementing a sensitive lighting strategy to prevent disturbance to nocturnal species, particularly bats.

The report sections below should be read in full and detailed guidance given in this report must be followed to avoid breaching legislation regarding protected and invasive species.

This report is valid for one year from the date of the survey visit. Should works be delayed to later than one year after the survey then a further update survey of the site would be required as habitats change over time, along with their potential to support protected species.

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INTRODUCTION

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located at Holiday Inn, 200 High Street, Colliers Wood, London, SW19 2BH and portions of surrounding habitats. It is approximately 0.04 hectares in area and centred at OS Grid Reference TQ26717031. The site currently consists entirely of buildings (u1b5) and developed land, sealed surface (u1b), introduced shrubs (u – 818) which require no habitat condition assessment. Local planning authority is Merton.

LOCAL AREA AND SURROUNDING HABITATS

Wandle Park and its surrounding habitats (directly adjacent to the west) play a vital role in local biodiversity, providing essential green spaces in an urban setting. The park is home to a range of habitats including grasslands, wetlands, and mature trees that support various species of birds, insects, amphibians, and small mammals. The nearby River Wandle adds to the ecological richness, serving as a key wildlife corridor that enhances habitat connectivity and supports aquatic and riparian species.

Fig.1: Surrounding landscape – Data from Google Earth (2024)

SURVEY SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The survey covered all areas within the site proposal boundary. It was commissioned to identify any ecological constraints that should be considered when carrying out works in the area. Constraints could include the potential for impacts on protected or notable species or sites, and presence of invasive species. Annex 3 to this report includes details of relevant legislation and policies relating to protected species and sites and invasive species.

Further surveying or mitigation works are recommended where relevant. If works are to be carried out any later than a year after this report, then a second site visit is recommended so that an update to this report be carried out. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out in order to provide the information required.

A site-based survey to identify habitats, using the UK Habitat Classification System survey (UKHab) (Butcher *et al.,* 2020), and the presence or potential for presence of protected, priority or notable species was also undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist, member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). The survey included a walkover of the whole site extent and the surrounding areas, where access was possible, to gain a greater understanding of the site context, its immediate surrounds and connectivity to adjacent habitats. Target notes (TN) were used to record any habitats or features of particular interest and any sightings, signs or evidence of protected or notable fauna, or any potential habitats or features suitable to support these species.

METHODOLOGY OF SURVEY

Habitats on-site were recorded in accordance with the principles and methods outlined in the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab), 2018 and subsequent updates. The UKHab methodology provides a comprehensive and standardised approach for classifying and mapping habitats across the UK, enhancing comparability and consistency in ecological data collection.

The survey involved a site visit to assess and record the habitats and ecological features present within the site and its immediate surroundings. Habitat types were identified using the UKHab classification framework, which incorporates specific habitat definitions, hierarchical codes, and diagnostic criteria. Observations were recorded, and habitats were mapped to ensure accurate representation of the site's ecological features.

During the survey, dominant species within each habitat were noted, and particular attention was given to features indicative of biodiversity value. In addition, the potential for the presence of protected or notable species was evaluated based on the observed habitats, field evidence, and professional judgment. Recommendations for further surveys or mitigation measures were provided where required, based on the evidence gathered during the site assessment.

This survey was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, ensuring adherence to professional standards and best practices for ecological survey work.

This update integrates the UKHab methodology while maintaining compliance with CIEEM guidelines. It highlights the structured and modern approach to habitat classification and ecological assessment.

The following protected species are those most commonly found on potential development sites:

1. Bats

2. Birds

3. Great crested newts

4. Reptiles

5. Terrestrial mammals – Badgers, dormice, water voles

Table 1: Terms used in report to indicate likelihood of species presence

Confirmed	**Species directly observed on site** **Clear evidence of species presence observed (e.g. droppings, burrows, etc.)**
High	Important structures or features of use for breeding or refuge present. For instance, ponds for newts, old trees for bats. Significant amount of high-quality foraging habitat present Site adjacent to surrounding areas of suitable habitat, or connected by linear features of use to commuting species (e.g. river) Site close to known offsite species populations
Medium	Some features suitable for breeding or refuge present. Some suitable foraging habitat available Site connected to suitable offsite areas of habitat
Low	Small amounts of low-quality areas for refuge or breeding Small areas suitable for foraging Site not connected to suitable offsite habitats or species not likely to enter site.
Negligible	No suitable habitats on site

The likelihood of species being present ranges in a continuum from extremely unlikely to highly likely. The judgement of the surveyor combined with knowledge of habitats present, signs and sightings of animals and evidence from records is used to give an estimated likelihood of presence.

DESK STUDY

MAGIC SEARCH

A desktop study was undertaken through MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information System for Countryside). The search looked to identify the presence of statutory designated sites within a 2km radius (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (**SACs**), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (**SSSI**), National Nature Reserves (**NNR**) and Local Nature Reserves (**LNR**). A search for non-statutory designated sites was undertaken through Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) to search for Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (**SINC**) within a 1km radius.

A search of the MAGIC (magic.defra.gov.uk) website was carried out to determine if any European Protected Species Mitigation Licences had been granted in the same search area.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The ordnance survey 1:25000 scale map for the area was also examined for evidence of water bodies within 250m of the site which might be potential great crested newt breeding sites.

Desk Study Results

A desk-based search shows that there are no sites with European or national statutory designation within the search area and four LNRs.

Site Name	Designation	Proximity to the site
Lower Wandle	LNR	1300m NW
Wandle Meadow Nature Park	LNR	500m NW
Myrna Close	LNR	500m SE
Merton Green Walks	LNR	1100m SW

Table 2: Designations in proximity to the site

Non-statutory nature conservation sites located in proximity to the survey area are summarised below:

Site Name	Designation	Proximity to the site
Wandle Park	SINC	Adjacent W
Wandle Trail Nature Park and Lower River Wandle	SINC	100m W
Lambeth Cemetery	SINC	900m N
Streatham Junction to Wimbledon Railsides	SINC	600m NE

Myrna Close Valley	SINC	300m SE
Liberty Middle School Conservation Area	SINC	900m SE

Table 2.1: Designations in proximity to the site

The Site is within SSSI Impact Zone (as noted in Appendix 2) however due to small scale of the development; it is believed that no opposing impact will be caused to habitats and species associated with nearby SSSI sites.

The desk study showed no likely potential great crested newt breeding ponds within 250m of the site that were not separated from the site by major barriers to dispersal. Major barriers might include busy roads, walls, dense housing or similar.

SURVEY RESULTS

WEATHER CONDITIONS DURING SITE VISIT

Weather conditions are shown below:

- Precipitation: None
- Temperature: 9°C
- Cloud cover: 100%
- Wind (Beaufort Scale): 1

CONSTRAINTS TO SURVEYING

No limitations were experienced on the day of the survey.

HABITATS FOUND ON SITE

The site area was found to contain the habitats described below. Annex 1 to this report is a map showing locations of these habitats. Target notes are classed at TN1, TN2 and so on.

Table 3: Habitats found on site

Developed land (sealed surface) and buildings

The site is dominated by four storey modern built hotel chain which is operating on daily basis. It had a flat roof and no lofts were recorded. The building lacked external potential roosting features due to its modern design.

Ecological Value: Generally, sealed surfaces provide negligible ecological value, as they do not support vegetation or wildlife habitat. However, minor biodiversity benefits may arise if green infrastructure elements such as planters, green roofs, or small tree pits are incorporated.

Introduced shrubs

During the survey, some portions of introduced shrubs were recorded, primarily dominated by ivy (*Hedera helix*) and butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) to the north of the site. Additionally, potted shrubs were noted to the east of the site. Introduced shrubs typically

provide low ecological value for local wildlife, as they often lack the structural diversity and native plant associations needed to support a wide range of species. However, they may still offer limited foraging and shelter opportunities for invertebrates and some urban-adapted birds.

Potted shrubs along eastern boundary

Shrubs to the north of the site

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO PROTECTED SPECIES AND SITES AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Table 4: Discussion of results and recommendations

Protected species or features	Potential for presence	Discussion
Badger setts	**Potential- Negligible**	Areas surrounding the site are suitable for badgers as they contain suitable foraging and commuting grounds. No signs of badger activity were found on site and no setts were seen within 30m of the proposed development and the whole site boundary.
Recommendations regarding badger setts: The survey found a negligible probability of badgers being present on site. As a result, no further surveying or mitigation for badgers is recommended.		
Bat roosts	**Potential- Negligible**	During external assessment of the existing hotel building, no potential roosting features were noted that could be potentially utilised by fauna such as bats. Similarly, the willow tree closest to the bridge did not contain any potential roosting features.
Recommendations regarding roosting bats: The survey classed the hotel building as negligible to provide roosting opportunities for bats therefore no further surveys are required.		
Bat foraging and commuting routes	**Likely importance of area for foraging and commuting bats – Moderate/High**	Bats are very likely use the site for foraging and commuting. Habitats adjacent to the site could be used for foraging or commuting.
Recommendations regarding foraging and commuting bats: It is recommended that site lighting is designed to avoid increasing lightfall onto trees around the site which might be used by bats for foraging around. Lighting should be designed to avoid increased lightfall onto trees adjacent to the boundaries of the site, as additional lightfall may deter foraging bats and negatively impact other nocturnal wildlife.Guidance on bats and lighting can be found in this link - https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/		
Nesting birds	**Potential - Low to Moderate**	The habitats within the site boundary were suitable for nesting birds.

Protected species or features	Potential for presence	Discussion
Recommendations regarding nesting birds: Some potential was identified; vegetation clearance or construction work should avoid the nesting season (March–August) or be preceded by an ecologist's inspection.		
Dormice	**Potential-Negligible**	No habitats on site to support hazel dormouse population.
Recommendations regarding dormice: The survey found a negligible probability of dormice being present on site. As a result, no further surveying or mitigation for dormice is recommended.		
Great crested newts	**Potential – Negligible**	The site contains no suitable waterbodies on site for breeding newts. The site contains no areas of suitable terrestrial habitat for newts. There are no known suitable breeding ponds within 250 metres of the site. Flowing water within Wandle Park was recorded.
Recommendations regarding great crested newts: The survey found a negligible probability of great crested newts being present on site. As a result, no further surveying or mitigation for great crested newts is recommended.		
Reptiles	**Potential – Negligible**	No habitats suitable for reptiles occur on site.
Recommendations regarding reptiles: No further surveying or mitigation for reptiles is recommended.		
Other protected species	**Potential – Negligible**	No habitats suitable for reptiles occur on site. Therefore it is unlikely that these species are to be present on site.
Recommendations for other protected species: None required		

Protected species or features	Potential for presence	Discussion
Species of Principal Importance under NERC Section 41	**Potential - Moderate/High**	As the site is within close proximity to SINC, offsite habitats likely to support Species of Principal Importance (such as toads, hedgehogs, stag beetles, etc.) might be using the site boundaries.
Recommendations relating to Species of Principal Importance: General advice: Any large excavations must be covered to avoid small mammals and other species potentially being trapped overnight. Do not disturb any deadwood that might be found along the western boundary.		
Invasive species (Schedule 9)	**None found on site**	No important invasive species were found on site.
Recommendations relating to invasive species: As no important invasive species were found no precautions are required relating to these, however, should workers subsequently find species such as Japanese knotweed or giant hogweed on site works should stop within 7 m of the area until further advise can be sought from an ecologist or specialist knotweed or invasive species control contractor.		
Protected sites	**Adjacent to the site**	Wandle Park SINC which interconnects to Wandle Trail Nature Park and Lower River Wandle SINC
Recommendations relating to Protected Sites: The proposed development is unlikely to cause any significant long term negative impact on the adjacent Wandle Park SINC. Implementation of an Ecological Construction Management Plan (ECMP) to ensure best practices in biodiversity protection and enhancement is advised.		
Habitats of Principal Importance	**Found adjacent to site**	The site does contain NERC Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance: the priority deciduous woodland.
Recommendations: Considering the direct adjacency of the development site to the Wandle Park SINC (including 0.41 ha of priority deciduous woodland), implementing an ECMP is essential to safeguarding the ecological integrity of the habitats of principal importance. The outlined best practices will help mitigate potential impacts and ensure compliance with conservation obligations.		

Impact Assessment and recommendations

Badger Setts

A 30-meter boundary survey was conducted around the proposed development site to assess the potential presence of badger setts. No evidence of badger activity or setts was found within the survey area. As a result, no further surveys or mitigation measures are required.

Bat Roosts

An assessment of the site concluded that it is unlikely that bats are roosting in the existing structures. The building lacks suitable roosting features, and no direct evidence of bat presence was observed. Therefore, no additional surveys or mitigation measures are necessary for bat roosts.

Bat Foraging and Commuting Routes

Although no bat roosts were found on-site, bats may use the area for foraging and commuting, particularly in the adjacent treelines and green spaces. To minimize disruption to bat activity, site lighting should be carefully designed to prevent excessive light spill onto trees or habitat features that could serve as bat foraging corridors. Additional artificial light exposure may deter bats and negatively impact other nocturnal wildlife. The lighting plan should follow best practice guidelines, ensuring that lightfall is directed downward and shielded from sensitive areas.

Nesting Birds

Some potential for nesting birds was identified on-site, particularly within introduced shrubs. The northern section of the site contains ivy (Hedera helix) and butterfly bush (Buddleja davidii), while potted shrubs are present to the east. Although these introduced shrubs provide low ecological value, they may still serve as foraging and sheltering sites for certain invertebrates and urban birds. To avoid disturbance to breeding birds, vegetation clearance or construction work should be scheduled outside the nesting season (March–August). If work must proceed during this period, a qualified ecologist should inspect the site before any clearance activities begin.

Dormice

The site lacks suitable habitat for dormice, and no evidence of their presence was observed. Therefore, no further surveys or mitigation are required.

Great Crested Newts

No suitable water bodies or terrestrial habitats for great crested newts were found within the site. Additionally, there are no known breeding ponds within 250 meters of the site that are not separated by major barriers. As a result, no further surveys or mitigation measures are required.

Reptiles

Due to the absence of suitable reptile habitats, the likelihood of reptile presence on-site is negligible. No additional surveys or mitigation measures are necessary.

Other Protected Species

The survey found no evidence of other protected species requiring further assessment. As a result, no additional surveys or mitigation are needed for these species.

NERC Section 41 Species of Principal Importance

To minimise the potential impact on priority species, it is recommended that any large excavations be covered overnight to prevent small mammals and other wildlife from becoming trapped. Additionally, any deadwood found along the western boundary should not be disturbed, as it may provide an important habitat for invertebrates, fungi, and small mammals.

Invasive Species

No invasive species requiring further action were identified on-site. Therefore, no additional surveys or control measures are required.

Protected Sites

The site is adjacent to Wandle Park SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation). While the proposed development is unlikely to cause any significant long-term negative impact, it is recommended that an Ecological Construction Management Plan (ECMP) be implemented. This plan will ensure that best practices in biodiversity protection and enhancement are followed during construction activities.

Habitats of Principal Importance

The site is directly adjacent to a priority deciduous woodland covering approximately 0.41 hectares. To safeguard the ecological integrity of this habitat, an ECMP should be implemented to prevent habitat degradation. The plan should incorporate measures to mitigate potential environmental impacts, such as dust control, pollution prevention, and restrictions on construction activity near sensitive habitats. These best practices will help ensure compliance with conservation obligations while supporting local biodiversity.

Recommended Enhancements

Opportunities for ecological enhancements should be considered to align with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) principles. The following measures are recommended:

- Planting two small native species trees within the site boundary to contribute to biodiversity net gain, as identified in the Biodiversity Impact Calculation Report.
- Installing bird nest boxes on buildings or nearby trees to support urban bird populations.
- Incorporating bat bricks into building structures to create roosting opportunities.

• Implementing a sensitive lighting strategy to prevent disturbance to nocturnal species, particularly bats.

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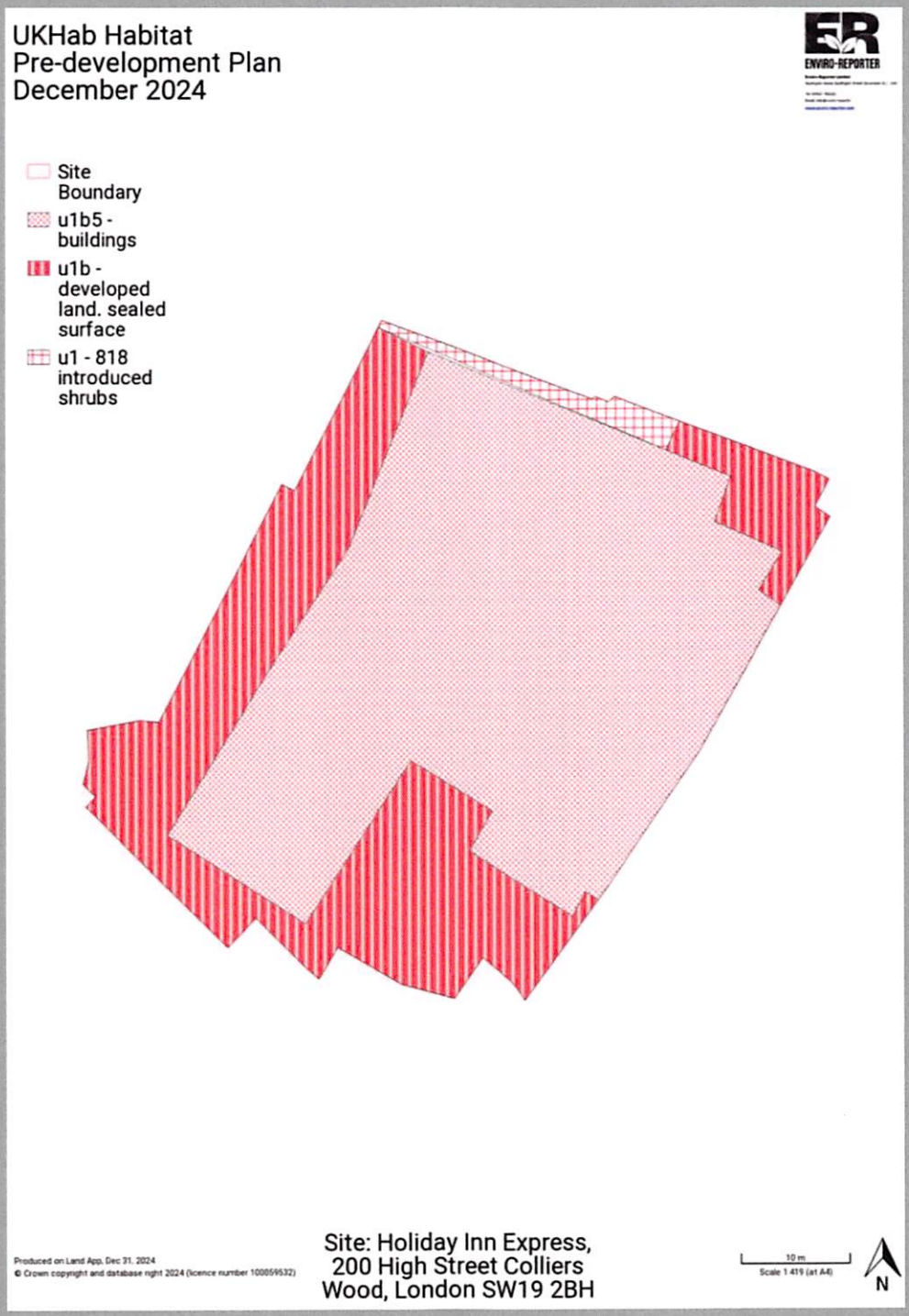
ANNEXES

Appendix 1: UKHab Habitat Pre-development showing habitats on site

Appendix 2: Relevant Legislation and Planning Policies

Annex 1: UKHab Habitat Map showing habitats on site on 6th November 2024



Annex 2: Relevant Legislation and Planning Policies

Badgers

Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. All the following are criminal offences: to wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or to attempt to do so; to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it. A badger sett is defined in the legislation as 'any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger'. Badger setts can be disturbed by a multitude of operations which include excavation and coring. (English Nature, 2002).

Bats

All species of British bat are listed in Appendix II of the Berne Convention and various annexes of the Habitats Directive. They are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 2017 (Regulation 43). It is therefore illegal to kill, injure or handle any bat or obstruct access to, destroy or disturb any site that they use. A £5000 fine and/or 6 months imprisonment per offence is the maximum penalty. Where a bat roost will be affected by development a licence to carry out the work will be required (issued by Natural England). This will be granted only if suitable mitigation for any adverse impacts on bats is to be carried out.

Nesting Birds

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) it is a criminal offence to disturb nesting birds. The breeding season for most species is generally considered to extend between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, although some species may breed slightly earlier in the year or later. Site operations should be phased where possible to occur outside the breeding season. Within this period, clearance of structures and vegetation can only take place if either:

1) Affected areas are first checked by an ecologist or other suitably qualified person and no nesting is found to be occurring.

2) All parts of the vegetation or structures are clearly visible, and no sign of nesting can be seen.

If nests are found, work will have to be delayed in that area until chicks have left any nests.

For birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act the protection is increased and it is also an offence to disturb them whilst in the process of nest building or at a nest containing eggs or young. It is an offence also to disturb dependent young. Bird species included in Schedule 1 include kingfishers, black redstarts, barn owls and red kites among others.

Dormice

The hazel dormouse is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is also a European Protected Species and as has additional protection in the UK under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a hazel dormouse, possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a hazel dormouse, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a hazel dormouse (including their habitat). It also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a hazel dormouse while it is occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection. A £5000 fine or six months custodial sentence per offence applies.

Great crested newts

Great crested newts are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is also a European Protected Species and has additional protection under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a great crested newt, possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt (in practice this means breeding sites and terrestrial habitat). It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection. A £5000 fine or six months custodial sentence per offence applies.

Otters

Otters are legally protected by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2017(as amended) - "the Habitats Regulations". They are therefore classed as European Protected Species. Under these Regulations they are given the highest level of species protection. In summary it is illegal to:

- deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or take (capture) an otter;
- deliberately or recklessly disturb or harass an otter;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place of an otter (i.e. an otter shelter).

Otter shelters are legally protected whether or not an otter is present.

Reptiles

All native reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are protected against killing or injuring even during lawful development. A £5000 fine or six months custodial sentence per offence applies.

Water voles

Water voles are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Water voles are protected against intentional killing, capture or injury and intentional or reckless disturbance, obstruction, damage or destruction or their burrows. A £5000 fine or six months custodial sentence per offence applies.

Other protected species

There is a list of species of principle importance as set on in section 42 of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC 2006). These species are regarded a material consideration in planning applications and are usually protected by planning policies.

Invasive Plant Species

Some plants, such as Japanese knotweed are listed under Schedule 9, Part 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This states that it is an offence to "plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild" any plant listed in the schedule. "In the wild" is generally taken to mean any area outside the landowner's site. It is therefore an offence to allow it to spread onto neighbouring sites or to allow some listed plants to be removed offsite without proper disposal, as this could also allow them to spread offsite.

Hedgerows

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 provide protection for some types of hedgerows. Under the regulations most hedges require submission of a 'hedgerow removal notice' and approval by the local authority before they can be removed. All 'important' hedgerows are to be retained and protected from destruction and damage. There are a number of rules determining how a hedgerow is classified as 'Important'. In most cases the hedgerow is required to be in excess of 30 years old and to contain specific indicator plants. An individual hedge, or more likely, the trees within a hedge can also be subject to a Tree Preservation Order, or TPO, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Protected/priority habitats

There is a list of habitats of principle importance as set on in section 41 of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC 2006). These habitats are regarded a material consideration in planning applications and are usually protected by planning polices

National Planning Policy

National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021). Chapter 15 relates to conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
The most relevant policies relating to planning decisions are summarised below:

- Recognising the wider benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services
- Minimising impacts to and providing net gains in biodiversity
- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused
- Proposed development on land within or outside a SSSI likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI should not normally be permitted

- Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted
- Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss of deterioration of irreplaceable habitats
- By ensuring that new development is appropriate for its location, and that the potential sensitivity of the site is taken into account, planning decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.