

Walton Cross Cottage, Liversedge



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

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Brad Mitchell

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Summary

This report is produced to inform Brad Mitchell of potential ecological constraints associated with their proposed development site and the need for further reporting or output to support a planning application.

This report is based on a desk study of designated wildlife sites and records of protected or notable species, and an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey carried out in January 2026.

Key Findings

The Site comprises the grounds of Walton Cross Cottage. It is of generally low ecological value with higher value features such as trees and a drainage ditch concentrated along the Site boundaries. Beyond the recommended retention of established trees and control of invasive species, ecological constraints have not been identified at the Site.

Further surveys

Further surveys have been recommended for roosting bats and great crested newt.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Brad Mitchell to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Walton Cross Cottage, Liversedge, grid ref. SE17682366. The survey includes land within the red line boundary shown in Figure 1, opposite.
2. This report is produced with reference to British Standard BS:42020 'Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development' and the CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Purpose of a PEA

3. A PEA is an *initial assessment* of the baseline for a proposed development site and establishes whether the Site is likely to be constrained by ecology, and whether more information is needed to identify the ecological baseline.
4. The subsequent Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) is intended to give guidance to a developer and assist with the early stages of project planning and design. Where a site is not complex or constrained, and no additional ecological input is necessary, the PEAR *may* be sufficient and suitable to support a planning application.

Proposals/Reason for PEA

5. The PEA has been commissioned to inform proposals to develop this Site for housing.

The Site

6. The application site 'the Site' comprises a small plot, including a house, adjacent garden and surrounding grounds under various uses. The Site area has been measured using GIS against the provided red line boundary as 0.48ha.

Figure 1 The Site (red line boundary).



Desk Study

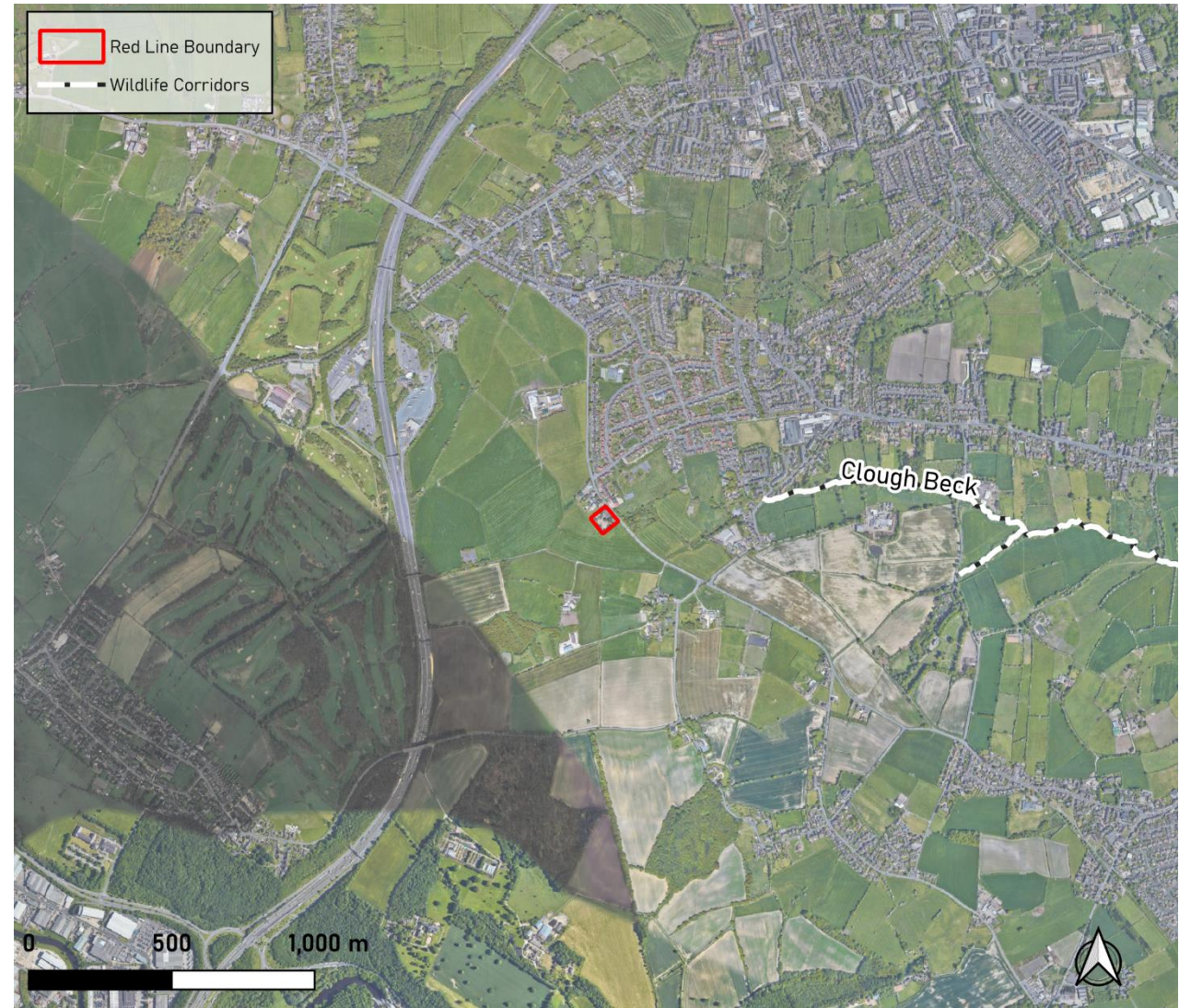
Landscape

7. The Site is located on the southwestern edge of Liversedge, c.6.5km northeast of Huddersfield. It is bound to the north by private residences, to the east by Windy Bank Lane, and to the south and west by arable fields.
8. Beyond these immediate boundaries, residential development associated with Liversedge extends to the north, with a mix of large, intensively managed arable fields, woodland pockets and farmsteads to the south. The M62 motorway runs north to south c.650m west, likely acting as a considerable barrier to faunal dispersal from beyond.
9. The Site overlies the sandstone Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, though underlying conditions are unlikely to impact habitats present given the largely developed nature of the Site.

Wildlife Corridors

10. The Site is not linked to any obvious wildlife corridors, with the closest notable corridor being Clough Beck c.680m east.
11. Better structured habitat within the wider landscape is limited to isolated woodland pockets to the south, none of which share functional links with the Site.

Figure 2 Analysis of wildlife corridors visible on mapping in relation to the Site.



Designations

12. The assessment uses a 2km area of search around the Site for records of protected and notable species and locally or nationally designated wildlife sites.

Statutory Designations

13. A search has been made to identify any nationally designated sites within a 2km radius of the Site, or internationally designated sites within a 10km radius. None were found.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs)

14. The Site does not lie within a SSSI IRZ.

Non-Statutory Designations

15. There is a single Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within the search area, Clifton Lagoon designated for its mosaic of habitats including species-rich grassland. Direct and indirect impacts on the LWS as a result of proposals are considered unlikely, being separated by 1.8km of mostly intensively managed arable land.

Nature Improvement Area

16. The Site is not within any Nature Improvement Area.

Wildlife Habitat Network

17. The Site does not lie within or in proximity to the Kirklees or adjacent Calderdale Wildlife Habitat Networks.

Granted EPSM Licences

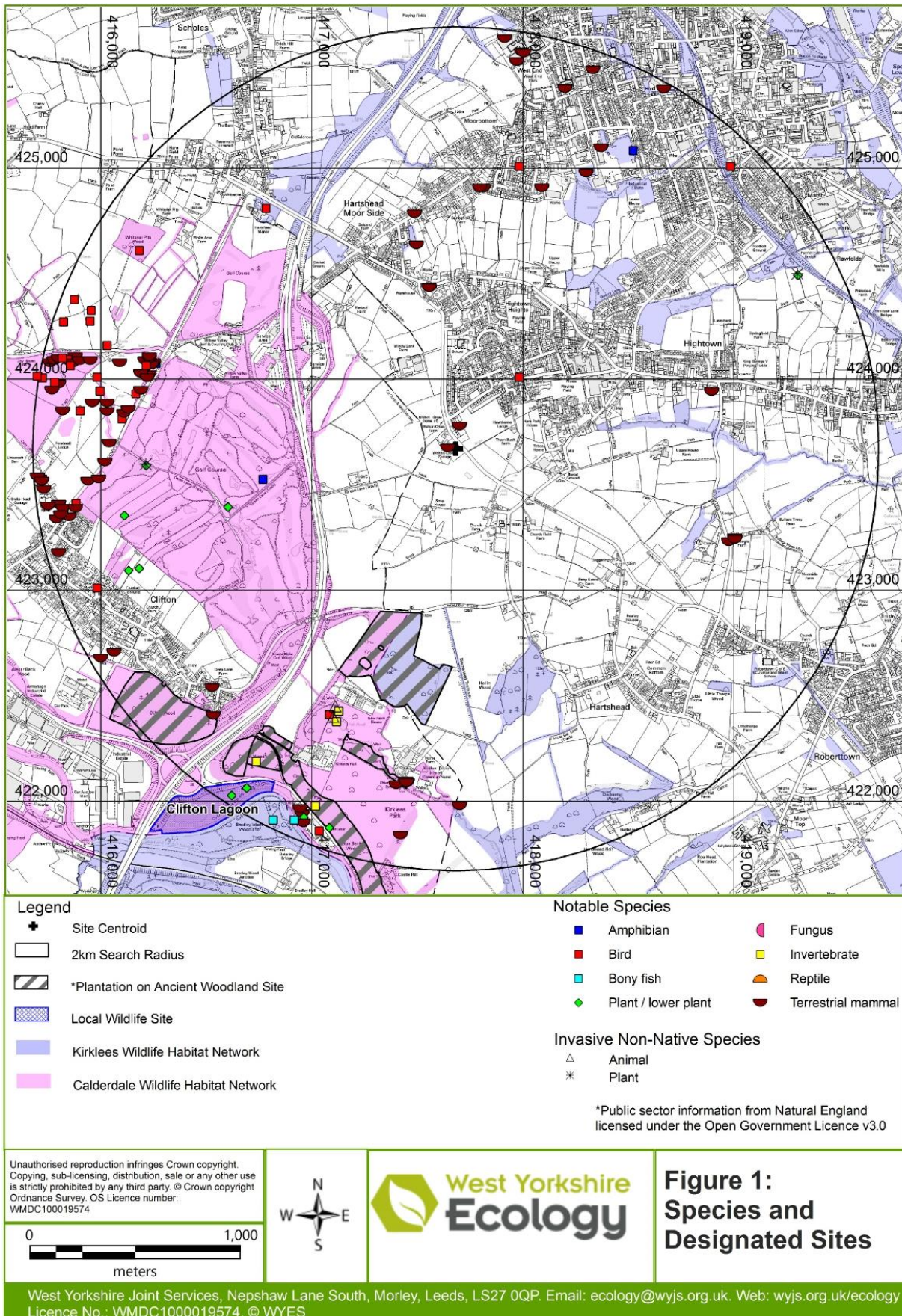
18. There are no granted European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences shown within 1km of the Site.

Mapped Ancient Woodland and Trees

19. There is no mapped Ancient Woodland (AW), Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) Ancient or Veteran Trees within proximity of the Site.

Mapped Priority Habitat

20. There is no mapped Priority Habitat within, or within influencing distance of the Site.

Figure 3 Records of designated sites and notable species within 2km of the Site; West Yorkshire Ecology.

Survey

21. The survey was carried out during January 2026¹ and followed the principles of Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010).
22. Although out of the main growing season, the nature of habitats present here, and the expertise and training of the surveyor meant that it was still possible to confidently classify the type and condition of habitats present on this Site.
23. Enough time was afforded the surveyor to carry out the survey. The survey was not constrained by poor weather.
24. Whilst the majority of the Site was accessible, at least 10% of the Site was inaccessible due to very dense vegetation, which could not be closely inspected. This could have concealed invasive species or protected species evidence.

Habitat Appraisal

25. The Site's habitats are described in order on the following pages. In line with the requirement to provide information on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), habitats are named in accordance with the UK Habitats classification system. We have used the UK Habitats v2.01 guidance in identifying habitats. Habitat descriptions are divided into the 'distinctiveness' categories, with more weight being afforded the more distinctive/important habitats.
26. Generally, the following apply to each tier of distinctiveness, although some authorities might highlight some lower distinctiveness habitats as having a higher importance locally. Where relevant we have highlighted these.

Very Low Distinctiveness Habitats

27. Habitats of little or no habitat value, i.e., lacking any significant native vegetation, but could still provide supporting habitat for protected or notable fauna such as birds or bats. In the context of BNG, their areas are included in calculations, but mitigation or compensation is not required.

Low Distinctiveness Habitats

28. Habitats which are ubiquitous, often which have been created or modified intentionally. They tend to lack diversity of species and structure. They are unlikely to support notable flora but could still provide supporting habitat for protected or notable fauna. In the context of BNG, they are included in calculations, but compensation/mitigation needs only to provide habitat of similar or higher distinctiveness.

Medium Distinctiveness Habitats

29. Habitats which are common but provide a higher level of structural and species diversity. Though unlikely to support more notable assemblages, species of interest could be present here and they are more likely to be important supporting habitat to fauna. In the context of BNG, mitigation needs to provide habitat of the same broad habitat type, or that of higher distinctiveness.

High Distinctiveness Habitats

30. Habitats which are more natural and contain more important assemblages of plants and potentially species which are rare in their own right. They will provide good habitat for fauna. These habitats are likely to be targeted as conservation priorities and will be the subject of additional policy guidance or legislation. In the context of BNG, whilst mitigation or compensation for loss or damage is possible, provision of more of the same type of habitat would be required, which (with a few exceptions) is likely to be difficult.

Very High Distinctiveness Habitats

31. These are the UK's rarest/best habitats. They will be present in very particular locations and a range of rare or important plant and animal species will depend on the particular conditions they provide. These habitats will be the subject of restrictive policy guidance or legislation. Whilst the BNG metric does not preclude mitigation or compensation in respect of these habitats, creation of the same habitat type would be required, and this would range between very difficult/expensive and impossible.

Irreplaceable Habitats

32. These are habitats of high biodiversity value, which are so difficult to recreate that it would be impossible to achieve the requirement to increase biodiversity on top of no net loss. These habitats have significant protection in the NPPF; any impacts from development require a strong justification and will flag as unacceptable in the Biodiversity Metric. Bespoke compensation for any loss of these habitats must be agreed with the LPA.

Condition Assessment

Our condition assessment for each habitat described references where available the criteria set out in DEFRA (2024) Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments. A completed version of this spreadsheet is provided digitally with this report. .

¹ This Report has been prepared during February 2026 following a visit to the Site in January 2026, and our findings are based on the conditions of the Site that were reasonably visible and accessible at that date. We accept no liability for any areas that

were not reasonably visible or accessible, nor for any subsequent alteration, variation, or deviation from the Site conditions which affect the conclusions set out in this report.

Features of Low/Very Low Distinctiveness

Figure 4 Approximate location and extent of these habitats.



Table 1 Summary – Features of Low/Very Low Distinctiveness.

UK Habitats	Summary Description	Condition assessment
Developed land; sealed surface	Sealed surfaces associated with footprint of existing residence, porta-cabins and surrounding hardstanding.	N/A
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	Unsealed gravel surfaces associated with access and parking. Devoid of significant vegetation.	N/A
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Outgrown, gappy, ornamental leylandii hedgerow bounding large portions of the Site and the garden.	N/A
Bare ground	Bare ground beneath treelines and hedgerows. Largely devoid of vegetation with shade tolerant and waste ground species occasionally present including cleavers, common fumitory, wood avens and chickweed.	Poor
Vegetated garden	Small patch of vegetated garden adjoining the residence comprising amenity lawn and ornamental planting beds.	N/A
Introduced shrub	Ornamental shrubbery bounding the Site entrances. Typical species include dogwood, cherry laurel and leylandii.	N/A
Modified grassland	Includes both an amenity lawn to the front of the property and a small football field to the rear, both of which are species-poor with perennial rye grass dominant. Forbs are occasionally noted to the front and include creeping buttercup, cleavers, common ragwort, bittercress, broadleaved dock and invasive variegated yellow archangel. Large patches of bare ground are found throughout, likely due to poorly draining soils. An average of 1-3 species are present per m ² .	Poor

Features of Low/Very Low Distinctiveness

Figure 5 Typical view of sealed surfaces.



Figure 6 Typical view of unsealed surfaces.



Figure 7 View of leylandii hedgerow.



Figure 8 Typical view of bare ground.



Figure 9 View of vegetated garden.



Figure 10 View of ornamental shrubbery.



Figure 11 View of football field.



Figure 12 View of amenity lawn.



Features of Medium Distinctiveness

Figure 13 Approximate location and extent of these habitats.



Table 2 Summary – Features of Medium Distinctiveness.

UK Habitats	Summary Description	Condition assessment
Urban trees	A number of mostly young to semi-mature trees distributed along the Site boundaries and within the garden. The majority are native/naturalised species including silver birch, ash, field maple, willow and horse chestnut, with occasional non-native specimens including eucalyptus and leylandii. All appear to be in fine condition, with no signs of over pruning. The majority overhang bare ground, with a line along Windy Bank Lane oversailing amenity lawn.	Moderate
Ditches	Drainage ditch running adjacent the Site. The watercourse is approximately 40cm deep at its deepest point, primarily fed by an outflow from the adjacent property and runoff from the Site and adjacent field. Water depth lessens with distance from the outflow, drying up to the southwest and flowing offsite to the east alongside Windy Bank Lane. The ditch does not appear to be linked to any larger watercourses. The steep banks are sparsely vegetated, with mostly ruderal species including broadleaved dock, spear thistle, nettle, common sorrel, bittercress, creeping buttercup and lamb’s ear. The watercourse itself lacks any submerged or emergent vegetation.	Poor

Figure 14 Urban trees along southeast boundary.



Figure 15 Typical view of drainage ditch.



Faunal Appraisal

33. The following pages discuss only the groups and species that could be reasonably expected to be found on the type of habitats present on, or adjacent to, the Site.

Amphibians

Desk evidence

34. Two ponds appear on mapping within 500m of the Site, P2 within a private garden c.400m east and P3 within an arable field c.410m southeast. A pool of standing water, part of a drainage ditch, was found directly adjacent the Site during survey, mapped as P1 opposite.
35. Records have been returned for common frog and common toad, none of which relate to the Site or its zone of influence. No records of great crested newt (GCN) have been returned.

Field Evidence

36. P1 provides potential breeding habitat for this group directly adjacent this Site. The Site itself offers limited terrestrial habitat at the base of hedgerows and ornamental shrubbery.

Summary Evaluation

37. Though the Site itself offers only limited terrestrial habitat for this group, given its proximity to P1 the absence of amphibians, namely great crested newt, from the Site cannot be concluded at this stage.
38. P2 and P3 are both over 400m from the Site, separated by roads and intensively managed arable land. Any amphibians present within these ponds are unlikely to make their way onto the Site given its isolation.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

39. Further survey will be required of P1 to determine whether GCN are present. This should take the form of an eDNA survey, to be carried out between mid-April and the end of June.

Figure 16 Ponds mapped in relation to the Site.



Figure 17 View of P1 (L) and P3 (R).



Bats

Desk evidence

40. Over a hundred records were returned, twenty of which relate to roosts of common pipistrelle, Leisler's, brown long eared and indeterminate vesper species of bat all located over 1km from the Site. Of note are two Leisler's maternity roosts located c.1.9km north within the grounds of Whitcliffe Mt School, recorded in 2005 and 2007.
41. Additional species recorded as active within the search area include soprano pipistrelle, noctule and an unspecified myotis species.

Field Evidence (Roosting)

42. There are three permanent structures on-site, labelled B1-3. Their suitability to support roosts is detailed in the table below. Several portacabins are present across the property, none of which supported any potential roost features.
43. The majority of trees on-site range from young to semi-mature, with few mature specimens. No potential roost features in association with the trees were found.

Table 3 Preliminary Roost Assessment.

Ref	Notes	Suitability
B1	Stone bungalow with double-pitched roof. Brickwork is well maintained. The roof is in largely fine condition though several gaps were found where mortar is missing along the ridgeline. A wooden fascia runs beneath guttering to the southeast, found lifted in places.	Low
B2	Stone garage of similar construction to bungalow. Well-sealed throughout.	None
B3	Kennel in garden of bungalow. Wooden construction with bitumen felt roof. Felt is lifted in some areas though resultant gaps are shallow and exposed, unsuitable for roosting.	None

Field Evidence (foraging and commuting)

44. The Site presents a relatively isolated and small parcel of land, it is unlikely to contribute much to local foraging resources.
45. The Site does not form part of any apparent network of habitat which could provide key commuting habitat locally.

Summary Evaluation

46. Building B1 has low potential for supporting roosting bats, with features able to support small numbers of crevice-dwelling species. Beyond this, the Site's size and location suggest that it will not be important to this group.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

47. Further survey will be required to determine the status of roosting within B1. This should take the form of a single evening emergence survey carried out within the active survey season (May-August inclusive).
48. There would be opportunities to provide new roost sites in buildings at the Site.

Figure 18 Building plan.



Preliminary Roost Assessment

B1 - General view



B1 - General view



B1 - Ridgeline gap



B1 - Fascia gap



B2 - General view



B3 - General view



Portacabins



Portacabins



Birds

Desk Evidence

49. A large number of bird records were returned, the majority being historical records from 1970-1988. Recent records are concentrated around land to the west of Willow Valley Golf Course, which include large counts of golden plover, lapwing, starling and common gull. No records relate the Site or its zone of influence.

Field Evidence

50. The Site provides suitable nesting habitat within outgrown hedgerows, shrubbery and trees.
51. A small number of bird species were noted during the survey including wood pigeon, collared dove and grey wagtail.

Summary Evaluation

52. Based on its size and habitats the Site will not be important to local bird populations.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

53. No further surveys are considered necessary to demonstrate current baseline in respect of birds.
54. Standard precautions apply in respect of restrictions on clearing vegetation during the nesting season.

Badgers

Desk evidence

55. There are no records of badgers within 200m of the Site. The Site falls within the area of increased probability of badger activity.

Field Evidence

56. The Site provides potential habitat for sett building at the base of outgrown hedgerows and treelines, however its location makes their presence here somewhat unlikely.
57. No evidence of badger was found during survey.

Summary Evaluation

58. Badger setts are unlikely to be present at the Site as affected by the proposals at this time.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

59. A precautionary pre-works check for badger setts is recommended – co-ordinated with Site clearance.

Hedgehogs (NERC Act 2006/Local BAP)

Desk evidence

60. Hedgehogs are not recorded within the search area.

Field Evidence

61. No evidence of hedgehogs was found on site.

Summary Evaluation

62. The Site provides suitable habitat for this species and at least occasional presence should be assumed.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

63. Presence assumed; no further surveys are considered necessary however measures to allow them continued access to gardens should be planned for.

Riparian Mammals

Desk evidence

64. There are no records of otter or water vole within the search area.

Field Evidence

65. The off-site drainage ditch provides limited potential habitat for this group, with sparsely vegetated banks offering little cover. The ditch is isolated, not connected to any larger watercourses that are likely to support these species.

Summary Evaluation

66. The likely absence of water vole and otter from the Site can be concluded.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

67. No further surveys or precautions are considered necessary.

Reptiles

Desk evidence

68. There are no records of reptiles within the search area.

Field Evidence

69. The Site provides some marginal basking and cover habitat.
70. No field evidence was found.

Summary Evaluation

71. Given the lack of records and better structured habitat in proximity reptiles are assessed as likely absent from the Site.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

72. No further surveys or precautions are considered necessary.

White-clawed crayfish

Desk evidence

73. No records have been returned for white-clawed crayfish (WCC).

Field Evidence

74. The drainage ditch has a silt bed with little cover, being of limited suitability to support WCC. It also lacks connectivity with any better structured habitat within the wider landscape that is likely to support this species and is likely to dry up during warmer periods.

Summary Evaluation

75. Given the absence of records and suitable habitat on-site and within proximity, the likely absence of WCC can be concluded.

Further Surveys and Recommendations

76. No further surveys or precautions are considered necessary.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

77. INNS are species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), for which it is an offence to cause or allow it to grow in the wild.

78. The following INNS were noted during survey²:

- Variegated yellow archangel

Survey constraints

79. This survey is constrained by the presence of areas that were inaccessible due to the density of vegetation.

80. It is not always possible to conclude absence from preliminary survey alone due to factors such as season, accessibility, third-party attempts to hide evidence, or undisclosed treatment programmes. For this reason, this report should not be relied upon as definitive evidence of absence of INNS.

81. This site presents a small risk of supporting undetected INNS based on the following factors:

- Areas of site inaccessible to survey
- Potential for recent earthworks or management which may have obscured viable material
- Potential for tipping of material

82. Should further assurances be needed in relations to INNS, a dedicated Invasive Weed Survey should be commissioned.

Figure 19 Variegated yellow archangel found on-site.



² Whilst our ecologists are trained in the identification of invasive species, this report is not a dedicated invasive species survey. Detectability of invasive plant species can be affected by several factors, and conclusive determination status, or extent, is not

possible through preliminary survey alone. As the presence of invasive species can generate significant costs to development, the client may wish to instruct a dedicated invasive species survey prior to entering into contracts.

Ecological Constraints

Habitat Value

83. The usual approach to development is to minimise any net loss of biodiversity towards a gain in biodiversity value where this is possible on-Site.
84. Irrespective of the Biodiversity Gain process, development should still seek to retain what is best about the Site.
85. The plan opposite shows the Site in the context of mapped habitat distinctiveness with the aim of informing the design of any layout. It shows that there are no targets of higher distinctiveness or irreplaceable habitat which would need to be avoided by the proposals.
86. Medium distinctiveness habitats are limited to trees concentrated along the Site boundaries and the off-site watercourse. Where possible, these should be retained within the layout and protected throughout development. If such features cannot be retained, consideration should be given to suitable mitigation on-site and where this is not achievable off-site mitigation may need to be considered.
87. Habitats occupying the majority of the Site interior do not impose any particular design constraints. Loss of habitat of this nature are not of the order which would require specific mitigation or compensation as they are common locally.
88. In terms of structure and connectivity, trees along the boundaries will contribute to the disjointed local network. These are of value in a local context and should ideally be retained.
89. Measures will need to be in place to prevent the spread of invasive variegated yellow archangel into the wild, as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Faunal constraints

90. The following further survey has been recommended:
 - Roosting bats - single evening emergence survey of B1 to be carried out during the active survey season (May-August inclusive).
 - Great crested newt - eDNA survey of P1 to be carried out during the survey season (mid-April - late June).
91. Standard precautions apply with regards to clearing vegetation during the nesting bird season. A pre-commencement check for badgers is recommended prior to site clearance.

Figure 20 Constraints plan.



Ecological Opportunities

92. Ecological opportunities at the Site relate to:

- Potential to improve connectivity locally through the retention and planting of native trees and hedgerows along the Site boundaries.
- Installing roosting or nesting features on new buildings.

93. A Biodiversity Management Plan would be useful in defining these enhancements and can be secured by standard condition.

Figure 21 Ecological Opportunities.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Planning considerations		
Recommendation	Rationale	When
R1 Additional Surveys	Single bat emergence survey of B1.	May to August inclusive
	Great crested newt eDNA survey of P1.	Mid-April to late June
R2 Produce a layout which minimises loss of biodiversity	Engage with the Constraints and Opportunities set out above, involve your ecologist in designs at an early stage. The proposals will need to consider the NPPF hierarchy of Avoid-Mitigate-Compensate, and the biodiversity gain hierarchy of Avoid-Enhance-Create-Offset in minimising any loss of biodiversity. Your layout may need to change to accommodate your findings from R1 surveys.	During the design process
R3 Design	Make sure your design team follows ecological advice to and make sure there are no design conflicts. <u>Produce a habitat retention plan at an early stage.</u> A habitat retention plan should identify areas which can be excluded from any impacts of clearance and construction. In producing a plan you should consider the need to provide (amongst other things) Site compounds, to store and move materials, to install drainage, flood storage, access and services, all with suitable easements. <u>Decide on the extent of red-line vs blue/black-line land.</u> Minimising the extent of your red line can limit exposure to BNG, but can also leave you needing separate legal agreements to use off-Site land for BNG delivery. Work out at an early stage what is right for your project. Your planning consultant should be able to help with this decision.	During the design process
R4 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Carry out a BNG Assessment using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and accompanying Condition sheets produced by Defra. Prior to development commencing, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) will likely be requested by the LPA.	During the design process.
R5 Produce a Biodiversity Management Plan	To specify in detail how the development will cater for biodiversity on-Site and to show how habitats incorporated will be managed.	Delivery report Suitable for planning condition

Other considerations (managing legal or financial risks)		
Issue	Rationale	When
R6 Nesting bird management	As with most sites, the standard precaution in relation to birds would apply. To prevent the proposed works impacting on nesting birds, any clearance of vegetation will need to be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season, which runs from 1st March–31st August inclusive. Any clearance required during the breeding bird season should be preceded by a nesting bird survey to ensure that the law is not contravened through the destruction of nests and that any active nests are identified and adequately protected during the construction phase of the development.	Prior to and during clearance
R7 Pre-construction ecology checks	It is always advisable to check that protected species (e.g., badger) and invasive weeds have not colonised or become visible in the period between the date of this report and construction activities commencing.	Prior to site preparation or archaeological/geotechnical investigations.

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Appendix 1 Habitats and Ecological Features



Project: Walton Cross Cottage, Liversedge
 Title: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Plan

Drawing Number: DR-9004-01
 Date: 29/01/2026
 Revision: -

Unit A, 1 Station Road
 Guiseley, Leeds
 LS20 8BX
 T: 01943 884451

Appendix 2 List of species recorded

Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Bittercresses	<i>Cardamine spp.</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broad leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Chamomile	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>
Cherry	<i>Prunus sp.</i>
Cherry laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Common fumitory	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>
Common ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Eucalyptus	<i>Eucalyptus sp.</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Lamb's ear	<i>Stachys byzantina</i>
Leylandii	<i>Cuprocyparis leylandii</i>
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus sp.</i>
Perennial rye grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Pine	<i>Pinus sp.</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Sowthistle sp.	<i>Sonchus sp.</i>
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Variegated yellow archangel	<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>

Willow	<i>Salix sp.</i>
Wilson's/ box honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera nitida</i>
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

Appendix 3 Explanatory Notes and Resources Used

Site Context

Aerial photographs published on commonly used websites were studied to place the site in its wider context and to look for ecological features that would not be evident on the ground during the walkover survey. This approach can be very useful in determining if a site is potentially a key part of a wider wildlife corridor or an important node of habitat in an otherwise ecologically poor landscape. It can also identify potentially important faunal habitat (in particular ponds) which could have a bearing on the ecology of the application site. Ponds may sometimes not be apparent on aerial photographs so we also refer to close detailed maps that identify all ponds issues and drains.

Designated Sites

A search of the MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) website was undertaken. The MAGIC site is a Geographical Information System that contains all statutory (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSIs]) as well as many non-statutory listed habitats (e.g. ancient woodlands and grassland inventory sites). It is a valuable tool when considering the relationship of a potential development site with nearby important habitats. In addition, information from the local record holders was referred to on locally designated sites.

Functional linkage with off-Site habitats

When assessing these we consider whether the Site could be functionally linked to them, considering links such as:

- Hydrological links – is the Site upstream downstream, or could ground water issues affect it?
- Physical links – is the site in close proximity and could it be directly or indirectly affected by construction and operational effects? Conversely it may be that despite proximity major barriers separate the two.
- Recreational links – do footpaths and roads make it likely that increased recreational pressure could be felt?
- Habitat links – is the site part of a network of similar habitat types in the wider area? These could be joined by linear corridors or could simply be ‘stepping stones’ of habitat of similar form or function.

Method

Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This involves walking the site, mapping and describing different habitats (for example: woodland, grassland, scrub). The survey method was “Extended” in that evidence of fauna and faunal habitat was also recorded (for example droppings, tracks or specialist habitat such as ponds for breeding amphibians). This modified approach to the Phase 1 survey is in accordance with the approach recommended by the Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (IEA, 1995) and Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2017).

Faunal Appraisal

This section first looks at the types of habitat found on Site or within the sphere of influence of potential development, then considers whether these could support protected, scarce, or NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species (referred to collectively as ‘notable species’).

Records of notable species supplied from a 2km area of search by West Yorkshire Ecology Service are used to inform this appraisal.

We discuss further only notable species or groups which could be a potential constraint due to the presence of suitable habitat and their presence (or potential presence) in the wider area. We screen out and do not present accounts of notable species or groups which do not meet these criteria – in some cases it may be necessary to explain this reasoning.

Consideration is given to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), which for this site is the 'Kirklees Biodiversity Action Plan'.

Species/group	Habitat
Floating water plantain	Semi-natural pasture
Great crested newt	Lowland and upland meadows
Marsh helleborine	Lowland dry acid grassland
Northern wood ant	Blanket bog
Twite	Upland heathland
Water vole	Upland flushes
White clawed crayfish	Lowland heathland
	Upland oak woodland
	Lowland deciduous and other woodlands
	Upland mixed ashwoods
	Wet woodland
	Arable field margins
	Hedgerows
	Rivers, riverine corridors and associated habitats
	Reedbeds
	Scrub and habitat mosaics on previously developed land

Bats

Bat roosting potential is classified according to the following criteria set out below, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

Bat Roosting Suitability of Buildings

Suitability	Criteria
<i>None</i>	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
<i>Negligible</i>	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
<i>Low</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
<i>Moderate</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation - the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
<i>High</i>	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

Bat Roosting Suitability of Trees

Suitability	Criteria
<i>None</i>	Either no PRFs in the tree, or highly unlikely to be any.
<i>FAR</i>	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present within the tree.
<i>PRF-I</i>	Potential roost feature suitable to support individual or low numbers of bats
<i>PRF-M</i>	Potential roost feature suitable to support multiple bats and possibly be used by a maternity colony

Evaluation

In evaluating the Site, the ecologist will take into account a number of factors in combination, such as:

- the baseline presented above,
- the Site's position in the local landscape,
- its current management and
- its size, rarity or threats to its integrity.

There are a number of tools available to aid this consideration, including established frameworks such as Ratcliffe Criteria or concepts such as Favourable Conservation Status. Also of help is reference to Biodiversity Action Plans in the form of the Local BAP and Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) to determine if the Site supports any Priority habitats or presents any opportunities in this respect.

The assessment of impacts considers the generic development proposals from which potential effects include:

- Vegetation and habitat removal
- Direct effects on significant faunal groups or protected species
- Effects on adjacent habitats or species such as disturbance, pollution and severance
- Operation effects on wildlife such as noise and light disturbance

Appendix 4 Bat Activity Survey Rationale

The Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (BCTG) (Collins 2023) is now widely accepted as providing a basis and rationale for scoping and conducting bat surveys. It is acknowledged that the guidelines provide a wealth of background and are a very useful tool in standardising approaches to survey, it is also felt that an over reliance on some of the guidelines within this document can result in the provision of complicated surveys where they have significant consequences for the cost, or timescale of a large project, but could never deliver positives for bat conservation.

Taking the BCTG document as a whole, Chapter 2 helps the reader understand whether or not surveys are required, and that in the context of planning and development survey is required in relation to ensure;

- the avoidance of legal offences, and;
- the provision of a sufficient level of information – such that will allow the Local Planning Authority to make an informed decision on the proposals and their potential impacts on the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of bats.

Attendance at seminars presented by, and discussions with, those involved in production of the BCTG document has emphasised the point that it is within the remit of the consultant ecologist to make a decision on the necessity and scope of surveys – they will use the guidelines in doing so but are not in any way bound by them: this is reflected in Section 1.1 of the guidelines –

‘The Guidelines do not aim to either override or replace knowledge and experience. It is accepted that departures from the guidelines (e.g. either decreasing or increasing the number of surveys carried out or using alternative methods) are often appropriate. However, in this scenario an ecologist should provide documentary evidence of (a) their expertise in making this judgement and (b) the ecological rationale behind the judgement.’

Such decisions require a consideration of the potential of the project to impact on bat habitat, alongside analysis of the value of habitat on and around the site and of local records and the likelihood that bats might occur in significant numbers. Our reports aim to present information on how we have arrived at our decision on the Site, what assumptions we have based this on, and where further survey is recommended we indicate what the objective of this survey should be and how best this would be achieved.

The Site is small, not strategically located and does not contain any potential key habitat features for bats, its use by this group can be easily predicted making any requirement for additional survey disproportionate.

This assessment was made by Charlie Foreman BSc (Hons) ACIEEM. Charlie has over 7 years of experience carrying out bat surveys in a professional capacity.

Appendix 5 Wildlife Legislation, Policy and Guidance

This is not an exhaustive list but sets out briefly the relevance of Legislation, Policy and Guidance in terms of planning applications and this assessment.

Legislation

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive).

Provides framework at an international (EU) level for the consideration/protection of European Protected Species (EPS), and habitats through the designation of sites.

Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of wild birds (EC Birds Directive) and The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971)

Provides framework at an international (EU) level for the consideration/protection of important bird populations and the sites on which they are dependant.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010)

This transposes the EC Habitats Directive into UK law and provides the basis on which all EPS are protected and impacts on them can be licensed in the UK.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended

This provides the basis on which UK species are legally protected or restricted and confers protection on Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSIs. It contains annexes of plants and animals which are legally protected as well as those which are considered to be invasive or harmful. It provides the basis on which impacts on such species can be licensed in the UK and provides controls on work on or near SSSIs.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)

Provides a statutory basis for nature conservation, strengthens the protection of SSSIs and UK protected species and requires the consideration of habitats and species listed on the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (UKBAP/LBAP).

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)

Sets out the responsibilities of Local Authorities in conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the Act requires the publishing of lists of habitats and species which are "of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity". At present these largely reflect those making up the UKBAP lists.

Hedgerows Regulations (1997)

Define and provide protection for Important Hedgerows.

Protection of Badgers Act (1992)

Protects badgers from persecution, this includes excavation/development in the proximity of setts.

Protected SitesStatutory EU/International Protected Sites

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites contain examples of some of the most important natural ecosystems in Europe. Work on or near these sites is strictly protected and Local Authorities will be expected to carry out 'Appropriate Assessment' of development in proximity of them. In this case there is often an increased burden on the developer in relation to provision of information and assessment.

Statutory UK Protected Sites

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); National Nature Reserves (NNRs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) all receive strict protection under UK legislation. Work in or in proximity to these sites would be restricted with any needing to be agreed with Natural England. Natural England now provide guidance on the nature of development which could impact on SSSIs through Impact Risk Zones.

Locally Protected Sites

Local Authorities have a variety of protected wildlife sites designated at a local or regional level. These are gradually being brought under the banner of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) but at present a plethora of different designations exist – all subject to local policy.

Protected SpeciesEuropean Protected Species

A number of species (most relevantly bats, great crested newts [GCN], and otters) receive strict protection from killing, injury and disturbance under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). Protection is also conferred on the habitats on which they rely such as roost space in the case of bats and ponds and fields etc. in the case of GCN.

UK Protected Species

A number of species (including bats, GCN, water vole and white clawed crayfish) are strictly protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, from killing, injury, disturbance and damage or destruction of their resting places etc. Certain species (such as reptiles) and some birds (such as barn owl) receive partial protection e.g. at certain times of the year or from certain activities only. All

nesting bird species are protected from damage or destruction of their nests – whilst active.

Invasive speciesSchedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

Lists these species and makes it an offence to cause or allow their spread in the wild. This often has impacts on development and planning in relation to the presence of invasive plant species such as: Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Irreplaceable Habitats

Irreplaceable habitats in the context of Biodiversity Net Gain are defined by The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 as including:

- Blanket bog
- Lowland fens
- Limestone pavements
- Coastal sand dunes

Additional descriptive guidance is provided for four further irreplaceable habitats:

Habitat	Description
Ancient woodland	Ancient woodland is areas of woodland that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600. Ancient woodland includes– (i) Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands (ii) Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (iii) Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland (iv) Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland
Ancient trees and veteran trees	Ancient and veteran trees can be found as individual trees or collections of trees in any setting. Ancient trees have passed beyond maturity into an ancient life stage or are old in comparison with other trees of the same species which exhibit one or more of the following– (i) demonstrably great age relative to others of the same species (ii) changes to their crown and trunk development indicative of the ancient life stage Veteran trees are mature trees that share physical and other characteristics in common with ancient trees, due to their life or environment, but are neither developmentally nor chronologically ancient. All ancient trees are veteran trees, but not all veteran trees are ancient. Veteran and ancient trees which have died are still recognised as such because they retain significant biodiversity value for many decades.

	Veteran trees exhibit one or more of the following– (i) significant decay features such as deadwood, hollowing or signs of advanced decay in the trunk or major limbs (ii) a large girth, depending on and relative to species, site and management history (iii) a high value for nature, especially in hosting rare or specialist fungi, lichens and deadwood invertebrates
<i>Spartina</i> saltmarsh swards	<i>Spartina</i> (cord-grass) saltmarsh swards colonise a wide range of substrates, from very soft muds to shingle, in areas sheltered from strong wave action. It occurs on the seaward fringes of saltmarshes and creek-sides and may colonise old pans in the upper saltmarsh
Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub	Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous (salt-tolerant) scrub develops in the uppermost levels of saltmarshes, often where there is a transition from saltmarsh to dunes, or in some cases where dunes overlie shingle. The form that most closely resembles the scrub vegetation of the Mediterranean is restricted to south and south-east England and is formed predominantly of bushes of shrubby sea-blite <i>Suaeda vera</i> and sea purslane <i>Atriplex portulacoides</i>

Planning Policy/Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in December 2024 with additional clarifications made in February 2025. The most relevant paragraphs from the NPPF are set out below.

The approach to assessing the natural environment is now embedded within the definition of what 'sustainable development' is and this falls under one of three objectives of the planning system – the 'environmental objective' applying in this case. Paragraph 8c (P8c) of the NPPF states that sustainable development should "protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment", including "improving biodiversity". P10 sets out the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Section 11 of the NPPF details making effective use of land. The Framework states that planning policies and decisions should take "opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation" and should "recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife" (P125).

Section 15 details conserving and enhancing the natural environment; policies and decisions should be "protecting and enhancing valued landscape [and] sites of biodiversity [...] value", "recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside" and contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution (P187). Allocations of land for development should, "allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework" and "take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats" (P188).

The Framework sets out ways to minimise the impacts on biodiversity through plans which "identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity" and promote the "conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity" (P192).

It is made clear in P193 that local planning authorities should apply a set of principles when determining planning applications. Planning permission should be refused "if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided [...], adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for".

Development should not normally be permitted where an adverse effect on a SSSI is likely, and "opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity".

UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023: update to Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services

The UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023 provide updates to the indicators set out in Biodiversity 2020 including new species abundance targets as set out in the Environment Act 2021. Biodiversity 2020 builds on the Natural Environment White Paper (June 2011) – Setting out the current UK Government's approach to nature conservation. It promotes a more coherent and inclusive approach to conservation and the valuing in economic and social terms of economic resources.

The strategy promotes initiatives such as Biodiversity Offsetting, Nature Improvement Areas and a focus on well-connected natural networks and introduces the concept of securing a 'no net loss' situation with regard to UKBAP/Section 41 habitats and species.

ODPM circular 06/05 (2005) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System

Provides guidance to Local Authorities on their obligations to biodiversity – particularly in relation to assessing planning applications and ensuring the adequacy of information.

BSI (2013) British Standards Institute BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development

Provides a standard for the biodiversity assessment and development industries and decision makers such as Local Planning Authorities to work to.