

Bamford Cricket Club, Rochdale



Preliminary Ecological Assessment

28/08/2025

Jet Network Solutions

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Contents

Introduction	1
Desk Study	3
Survey	5
Habitats	6
Faunal Appraisal	8
Conclusions and Recommendations	8
References	10
Appendix 1 List of species recorded	11
Appendix 2 Explanatory Notes and Resources Used	12
Appendix 3 Wildlife Legislation, Policy and Guidance	15

Summary

This report is based on a desk study of designated wildlife sites and records of protected or notable species, Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey carried out in August 2025.

The Site supports low value habitats associated with recently established blackthorn and goat willow scrub at the edge of a large expanses of a well-maintained cricket pitch. Loss of this area is not of ecological significance.

If works are scheduled during the bird nesting season a pre-start check should be carried out and a pre-commencement check for badger is also recommended.

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Jet Network Solutions to carry out an ecological appraisal of land at Bamford Cricket Club. This assessment was based on a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
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.

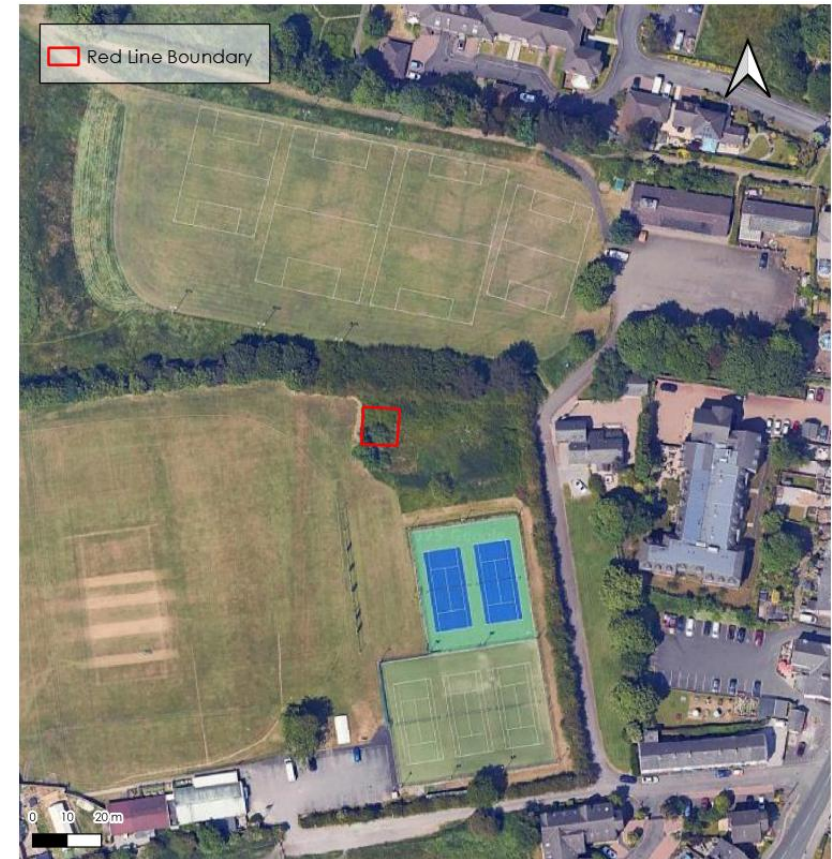
Purpose of a PEA

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 Assessment 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.
5. This report adapts the format set out in the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (December 2017) and in terms of initial survey of the Site CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

The Site and Proposals

6. The application site 'the Site' comprises an area of blackthorn scrub adjacent to the cricket ground.
7. 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.

Figure 1 Site location



8. Proposals are to erect a telecommunications mast. This will comprise of a 30m steel lattice tower, located in a fenced equipment compound. Detailed plans are provided alongside the application and reproduced overleaf.

Figure 2 Site Plan

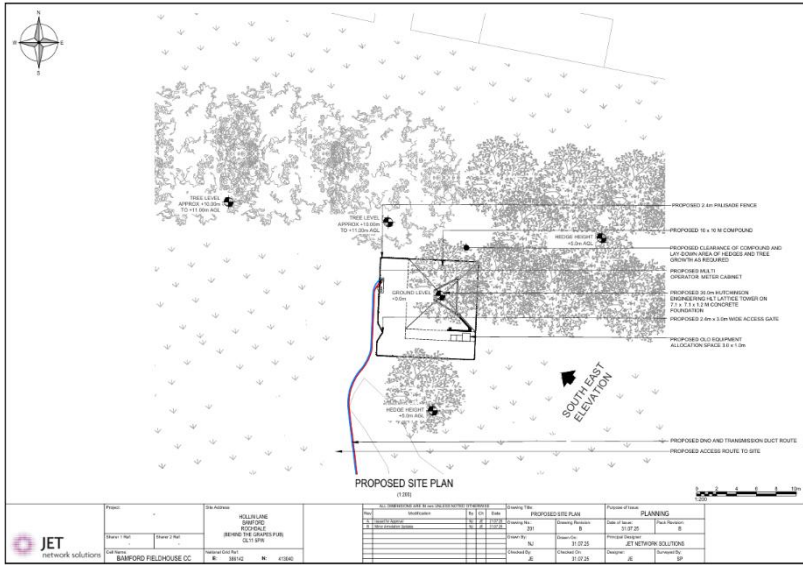
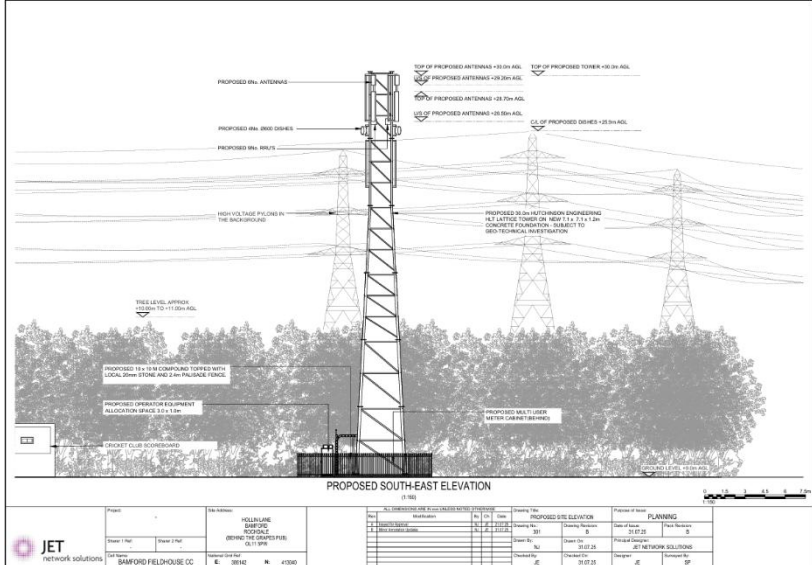


Figure 3 Site elevations



Desk Study

Landscape

9. The Site is located in Bamford, Rochdale, off Hollin Lane, within the cricket ground and associated facilities and is set within a predominantly suburban context. Residential development lies to the north, east and south, whilst to the west more open, predominantly pastoral, farmland is found. The immediate surrounds are characterised by well managed playing fields associated with the cricket ground.
10. This Site overlies the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, comprising mudstone, siltstone and sandstone leading to a mix of slowly permeable, wet acid upland soils and freely draining sandy soils. However, the underlying geology is likely to have limited impact on soil conditions given the built-up nature and highly managed surrounding grasslands.

Wildlife Corridors

11. There are few wildlife corridors within the area, limited to a section of woodland just off Bamford Mews just over 100m to the north.
12. The wider landscape is dominated to east, north and south by residential development interspersed with recreational land uses with no obvious wildlife corridors within influence of the Site.
13. To the west more open countryside is found, again well defined wildlife corridors are limited, though disperse hedgerows and the open nature will facilitate wildlife movements locally.

Figure 4 Wider landscape in relation to the Site (red-line).



Designated Sites*Statutory Designations*

14. 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. The results are shown in the below table.

Table 1 Statutory Designated Sites.

	Site Name	Distance	Designation	Summary Interest	Impacted?
1	South Pennine Moors phase 2	8.83Km E	Special Protection Areas (SPA)	Designated as important habitats for breeding birds.	<u>No</u>
2	Rochdale Canal	3.19Km SE	Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	Holds international importance for aquatic plant life, specifically rare floating water-plantain.	<u>No</u>
3	South Pennine Moors	8.83Km E	Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	Designated as important habitats for breeding birds.	<u>No</u>

Survey

- 15. The survey was carried out during August 2025¹ and followed the principles of Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). The survey was carried out in fair weather conditions with no limitations to access.

Habitat Appraisal

- 16. The Site’s habitats are described in order on the following pages, habitats are named in accordance with the UK Habitats classification system - we have used the relevant UK Habs guidance in identifying habitats. Habitat descriptions are divided into the ‘distinctiveness’ categories used in relevant DEFRA guidance- with more weight being afforded the more distinctive / important habitats.
- 17. 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

- 18. 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 calculation, but mitigation or compensation is not required.

Low Distinctiveness Habitats

- 19. Habitats which are ubiquitous, often which have been created or modified by man. 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.

Medium Distinctiveness Habitats

- 20. 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.

High Distinctiveness Habitats

- 21. 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.

Very High Distinctiveness Habitats

- 22. These are the UKs 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.
- 23. Each habitat is mapped and an area for each type is provided. The areas can be used to quantify the impacts of development in an Ecological Impact Assessment if this is required by the Local Planning Authority.

¹ This Report has been prepared during June 2024 following a visit to the site in June 2024 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.

Habitats

Table 2 Habitats on Site

Habitat	Summary Description	Distinctiveness
Blackthorn scrub	Blackthorn dominates the scrub with some competitive forbs noted at peripheries including creeping thistle, birds foot trefoil, creeping buttercup, broadleaved dock, brambles, nettles, ribwort plantain, compact rush, soft rush, sorrel, horsetail, perennial rye, Yorkshire fog, sweet vernal grass and common bent. Grasses from the adjacent modified grassland cricket pitch also feature along the boundary of the site.	Medium
Willow scrub	Goat willow and crack willow feature in scrub along the south western boundary, extending off Site to the south.	Medium

Figure 5 Habitats



Figure 6 General view of Site from the cricket pitch



Figure 7 Site with dense blackthorn scrub and grassland



Figure 8 View of scrub edge



Figure 9 Site looking north from western boundary



Figure 10 View of willow scrub



Figure 11 View of willow scrub



Faunal Appraisal

24. The following table discusses the groups and notable / protected species that could be reasonably expected to be found within the type of habitats present on, or adjacent to, the site, those not mentioned have been scoped out.

Table 3 Faunal Appraisal

Species / Group	Local Records (2km radius)	Further Survey / Consideration required	Rationale
Amphibians	Three local records of Great Crested Newt (GCN) were returned with the nearest being 1.73Km from the Site. Four common toad records have been returned for the Site with the nearest being 0.98Km away from the Site in 2015/2017.	No	No obvious nearby breeding habitat is shown on mapping nearby, within 250m. Whilst records of GCN have been returned these are well separated from the Site by roads. The small size of the Site means a negligible area of habitat affected so significant impacts on common species can be ruled out, whilst the presence of GCN is considered highly unlikely.
Badgers	Records returned 7 setts within a 2km radius. The nearest sett being 0.84km southwest of the site in 2005.	No	There is no evidence of badger activity within the Site boundaries or immediately adjacent areas, though badger may be present in the wider area they are unlikely to have any reliance on the Site but occasional presence cannot be ruled out.
Reptiles	Records of two common lizard have been returned with the closest being 1.27km away from the site in 2020.	No	Given the small size of the Site and ubiquitous nature of the habitat present reptiles are highly unlikely to have any reliance on such a small parcel of habitat. Furthermore, records are poorly connected to the Site and limited abundance further suggesting a likely absence.
Bats	Records returned 6 bat roost records with the nearest roost consisting of a common pipistrelle adult hibernation roost being 0.49Km southeast of the Site in 2002.	No	No potential roosting features are affected. Small numbers of common bat species have potential to make use of the scrub edge setting for foraging however it is unlikely to be of notable value given the presence of the nearby pitch, which is likely to mean the site is well lit at night.
Birds	Birds are well recorded locally, but with many records being of common and widespread species. More notable records include six barn owl records and a single willow tit record with the closest being 1.54 and 0.88Km away from the Site respectively.	No	Common species may forage and nest on the Site but are unlikely to be dependent on it, with similar habitats prevalent locally, though occasional presence cannot be ruled out. Habitats are unlikely to be suitable for barn owl and willow tit, barn owls requiring open foraging areas and the young scrub not being well established enough to support decaying willows suitable for willow tit nesting.

Conclusions and Recommendations

On site habitats

25. The Site supports common habitat of relatively low value and is not suspected to support any notable or scarce plant species.

Off site habitats

26. The surrounding scrub and playing fields are well used/ heavily disturbed by people and are unlikely to be impacted by the proposals provided some standard precautions are taken during construction to prevent damage to surrounding habitats, primarily through the use of tree protective fencing.

Protected and notable species

27. There is a limited risk of encountering nesting birds and badger at the Site. For birds, a pre-commencement check ahead of any works should be sufficient to manage risks during the nesting bird season, which runs from 1st March - 31st August. If works are undertaken outside this period nesting bird surveys would not be recommended. For badger a pre-commencement check ahead of any works is recommended to confirm continued absence.

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Appendix 1 List of species recorded

Bird's-foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broad leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Common bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Compact rush	<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>
Creeping bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Horsetail	<i>Equisetum sp.</i>
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Perennial rye grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Soft rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Sweet vernal grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

Appendix 2 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 [SSSI's]) 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 Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project 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 'Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan'.

Species/group	Habitat
Bats	Grasslands
Black redstart	Hedgerows
Farmland birds	Lowland mosslands
Great crested newts	Reedbeds and bittern
Hares	Ponds and lodges
Native black poplar	Canals
Twite	Native woodlands
Water vole	Uplands
Willow tit	Urban managed greenspace

Bats

Bat roosting potential is classified according to the following criteria set out below, taken from the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (2016).

Bat Roosting Suitability of Buildings and Trees

Suitability	Criteria
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. 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 a larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used 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 - the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure or tree 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, protections, conditions and surrounding habitats.

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 3 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

Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended

The Act sets out a series of measures which are designed to conserve biodiversity and to protect and enhance the biological and geological natural heritage of Scotland. In doing so, the Act provides the principal legislative components of a new, integrated, system for nature conservation within Scotland. The Act also locates the conservation of biodiversity and of Scotland's natural environment within a wider British, European and global context. In relation to biodiversity in particular, it requires public bodies and office-holders to consider the effect of their actions at a local, regional, national and international level.

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 1) 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.

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 Sites

Statutory 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.

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.

European 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 species

Schedule 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 (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

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.