

## Information Required for Ecology Reports

In submitting a planning application, applicants must identify protected or priority species, designated sites, important habitats or other biodiversity features on or adjacent to the development site. [Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire](#) gives an overview of these features in Oxfordshire; more detailed site level information is available from the [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre \(TVERC\)](#).

Where it is likely that a proposal will impact on any of these features, up to date biodiversity information will need to be provided with the planning application. The type of assessment needed will vary from a biodiversity survey and report to Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment if a European site is involved. Discussion of biodiversity survey needs at pre-application stage can help reduce the likelihood of delays resulting from requirement for survey being identified at a late stage.

Depending on the scale and location of the proposed development, the following surveys may be required:

### Biodiversity survey over a 2km radius of the proposed development site

- Desk study data search (using information from TVERC)

### Biodiversity survey over a 500m radius of the proposed development site

- Extended Phase 1 habitat survey
- Phase 2 habitat survey where potential UK BAP habitat has been identified in the Phase 1 survey
- Geological and geomorphological survey
- Landscape character assessment
- Scoping survey for potential habitat for protected species, species of conservation concern, rare and notable species and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) species
- Full survey for protected species, species of conservation concern, rare and notable species and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) species where potential habitat has been identified in the scoping survey

Surveys should be carried out by suitably qualified personnel. A list of ecological consultants is available on the [IEEM website](#).

All ecological reports should include the following:

- What biodiversity is present
- How biodiversity impacts can be avoided
- If it is not possible to avoid impacts, how they can be mitigated
- If there is no way of mitigating impacts, compensation measures should be identified
- How the application can result in overall enhancement in biodiversity

Avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be clearly stated to enable report recommendations to be conditioned and enforced.

The survey report should state whether the proposed works have the potential to impact on a European protected species and result in an offence under the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010](#). If an offence is likely, the applicant will need a licence from Natural England and OCC must consider whether a licence from Natural England is likely to be given before granting planning permission.

To obtain a licence from Natural England, the applicant must demonstrate how they meet the following three tests:

1. The development is for imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature
2. There is no satisfactory alternative
3. The action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

If the proposed works are likely to result in an offence, the applicant must state how the development meets these tests in order that OCC can demonstrate that we have considered the impacts of the development against the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

The recommendations outlined in the ecological survey report and enhancements should be incorporated into the development design and shown on drainage schemes, lighting schemes and architects drawings.

## Enhancements

All developments provide opportunities to create new wildlife habitats and should contribute towards Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan, delivered through the Conservation Target Areas. They should include green infrastructure such as hedgerow and tree planting and management, creation of ponds and swales, green roofs, roof spaces designed for bats, bat and bird boxes and bricks, the creation of hibernacula for reptiles & amphibians and the creation of species-rich grasslands.

This green infrastructure should ensure a net enhancement in biodiversity. See the [ONCF website](#) and the [South East Green Infrastructure Framework](#) for more information.

Where additional planting has been proposed as part of a planning application, a planting scheme should be included with the application. This should cover:

- Species mix (species should be of local provenance and appropriate to the local area - see [Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study](#))
- Plant size
- Planting layout
- Planting spacing
- Methods of establishment

Provision should be made by the applicant for the management of any green space and biodiversity features.

### **Source of Information for Data Search**

Ecology reports submitted to this planning authority as part of a planning application must include a data search from the [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre \(TVERC\)](#) rather than the NBN Gateway, unless it has previously been agreed with a planning officer that this is not necessary.

Submitting a desk study including data from TVERC will avoid unnecessary and costly delays to processing the planning application and ensures the application complies with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and the [NBN Gateways terms & conditions](#).

The authors of ecological survey reports for planning applications should be able to answer 'Yes' to all of the following questions:

- Do you have access to all the records at the highest available resolution?
- Do you have written permission from all the data providers to use their data in this way?
- Did you also contact TVERC to ensure that they have access to records which are not yet on the NBN Gateway?

If you cannot answer 'Yes' to the above questions, the planning application will not be validated.

Any suspected breaches of NBN Gateway terms and conditions will be reported by the local planning authority to the NBN Data Access Officer, who will take appropriate action.

### **Restoration of minerals and waste sites**

Proposed minerals and waste sites close to a [Conservation Target Area \(CTA\)](#) will be expected to contribute to the targets of that CTA. Areas restored to nature conservation after use will be subject to long-term management (currently 20 years over and above the statutory 5 year after-care period). The applicant will be expected to provide a management plan and the funding to implement it.

Areas not restored to nature conservation (e.g. agriculture) and smaller scale developments should ensure they incorporate green and blue infrastructure such as new hedgerows and ponds. See the [South East Green Infrastructure Framework](#) for more information.

For further advice [contact the Ecologist Planner](#).

## **Planning applications for the County Council's own developments**

Oxfordshire County Council's Protected Species Officers provides protected species advice for developments on County Council land such as schools and roads. They are involved in protected species surveys, assessments of impacts, drawing up mitigation plans and overseeing mitigation works. Further information on protected species is available on the [protected species and planning](#) page.