

SDCC Biodiversity & Ecology Pre Planning Guidance

Applicants for planning consent for large or sensitive sites are advised to address issues of ecological significance at the earliest stage in the development of an application for development, at a time when there is ample opportunity to appropriately protect, retain, and incorporate such features into the project design.

Applicants must consider legislative obligations for the protection of species and habitats in all applications for development. To avoid delays in the planning process, it is strongly recommended that applications include information relating to the following ecologically related issues:

- the location of the proposed development site in relation to protected sites, i.e. located within, adjacent to, or in the vicinity of proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs); Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPAs);
- advice on the potential for protected species or important habitats to be present on site should be sought from a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist;
- baseline ecological surveys will be required on greenfield sites and may be requested for other sites where potential for ecological impact is deemed to exist;
- the presence and status of ecological connectivity corridors (e.g. hedgerows, tree lines, rivers, streams etc.) must be identified, with proposals for development clearly showing how these can be retained, sensitively incorporated and further enhanced within the development design;
- as all bat species are protected under legislation, a survey for these species will generally be required to be submitted where the removal of hedgerows or trees is proposed or where the removal of roofs and / or the demolition of buildings or outhouses is proposed;
- where impact upon the existing ecological resource cannot be avoided, detailed mitigation measures (and/or derogation licences for the management of Protected Species where necessary) will be required to be included in order to appropriately address such impacts;
- where invasive species occur on a proposed development site, an Invasive Species Management Plan may be required to prevent the dispersal of such species off-site;
- applicants may be requested to furnish information in the format of a Natura Impact Assessment report to assist with the screening of the proposed development for Appropriate Assessment, as required under the EU Habitats Directive.

NOTE:

- As seasonality can affect the validity of ecological survey results, it is strongly recommended that surveys are undertaken at the most relevant and appropriate time of the year. Where insufficient or inappropriately timed survey results are submitted, a request for Further Information may be sought from the applicant to address the insufficiencies.
- Where it may become evident that biodiversity has been disturbed or removed from a proposed development site prior to the submission of an application, measures to reinstate or significantly rehabilitate important features may be required in any subsequent grant of permission. Applicants should note that disturbance to certain species and habitats can lead to prosecution.
- Applicants must ensure that in all stages of development proposals, the protection of vital ecological corridors is considered by addressing issues such as appropriate layout and design and by detailing sufficient protection measures to be undertaken during the construction period for key features such as trees, hedgerows, rivers and streams.
- The Council's Biodiversity Plan 2017 – 2022 will be available in December 2017.