

BIODIVERSITY VALIDATION CHECKLIST FOR GREATER MANCHESTER



Part 1 Local Requirements for Protected & Priority Species

If the application involves any of the development proposals shown in **Table 1** (Column 1), a protected species survey and assessment must be submitted with the application. Exceptions to when a survey and assessment may not be required are also explained below. The **Survey** should be undertaken and prepared by competent persons with suitable qualifications and experience and must be carried out at an appropriate time and month of year (see Table 3) in suitable weather conditions and using nationally recognised survey guidelines/methods where available. The survey may be informed by the results of a search for ecological data from a local environmental records centre/Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). The survey must be to an appropriate level of scope and detail and must:

- Record which species are present and identify their numbers (may be approximate);
- Map their distribution and use of the area, site, structure or feature (e.g. for feeding, shelter, breeding).

The **Assessment** must identify and describe potential development impacts likely to harm the protected species and/or their habitats identified by the survey (these should include both direct and indirect effects both during construction and afterwards). Where harm is likely, evidence must be submitted to show:

- How alternative designs or locations have been considered;
- How adverse effects will be avoided wherever possible;
- How unavoidable impacts will be mitigated or reduced;
- How impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated will be compensated.

In addition, proposals are to be encouraged that will enhance, restore or add to features or habitats used by protected species, even where there are currently no such species present on the site. The Assessment should also give an indication of how species numbers are likely to change, if at all, after development e.g. whether there will be a net loss or gain.

Where species reports are submitted for badgers these should be marked as confidential and not placed on the public record. Badgers are subject to unlawful persecution and the release of locational information may lead to further damage to this species.

Exceptions for When a Full Species Survey and Assessment may not be Required

- Following consultation by the applicant at the pre-application stage, the LPA has stated in writing that no protected species surveys and assessments are required.
- If it is clear that no protected species are present, despite the guidance in the table below indicating that they are likely, the applicant should provide evidence with the planning application to demonstrate that such species are absent (e.g. this might be in the form of a letter or brief report from a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist, or a relevant local nature conservation organisation).
- If it is clear that the development proposal will not affect any protected species present, then only limited information needs to be submitted. This information should, however, (i) demonstrate that there will be no significant affect on any protected species present and (ii) include a statement acknowledging that the applicant is aware that it is a criminal offence to disturb or harm protected species should they subsequently be found or disturbed.
- In some situations, it may be appropriate for an applicant to provide a protected species survey and report for **only one or a few** of the species shown in the Table below e.g. those that are likely to be affected by a particular activity. Applicants should make clear which species are included in the report and which are not because exceptions apply.

Table 1
Local Requirement for Protected Species: Criteria and Indicative Thresholds (Trigger List) for when a Survey and Assessment is Required

Proposals for Development That Will Trigger a Protected Species Survey	Species Likely To Be Affected And For Which A Survey Will Be Required												
	Bats	Barn Owls	Breeding Birds	Wintering Birds	Gt. Crested Newts	Otters	Black redstart	Little ringed plover	Water Vole	Badger	Reptiles	White-clawed crayfish	Aquatic plants incl. Floating water plantain, Grasswack pondweed & Freiberg's screw-moss
<p>Proposed development which includes the modification conversion, demolition or removal of buildings and structures (especially roof voids) involving the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All agricultural buildings (e.g. farmhouses and barns), whatever their condition, particularly of traditional brick or stone construction and/or with exposed wooden beams greater than 20cm thick. The only exception is modern agricultural buildings of prefabricated construction with steel/sheet materials. ▪ all other buildings of any type of construction except for those either of prefabricated construction with steel/sheet materials (such as modern warehouses) or flat roof structures with no roof voids, soffit or barge boards. ▪ All unused industrial chimneys, which are unlined and of brick or stone construction ▪ All tunnels, culverts, mines, kilns, ice-houses, adits, military fortifications, air raid shelters, cellars and similar underground ducts and structures; ▪ All bridge structures, aqueducts and viaducts (especially over water and wet ground). ▪ buildings within the city/town centre 	•	•	•										
Proposals involving lighting of churches and listed buildings or flood lighting of green space within 50m of woodland, water, field hedgerows or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water.	•		•										
Proposals affecting woodland, or field hedgerows and/or lines of trees with obvious connectivity to woodland or water bodies.	•		•							•			
<p>Proposed tree work (felling or lopping) and/or development affecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ old and veteran trees that are older than 100 years; ▪ trees with obvious holes, cracks or cavities, ▪ trees with a girth greater than 50cm at chest height; 	• • •		• • •										

Proposals affecting gravel pits or quarries and natural cliff faces and rock outcrops with crevices, or caves.	•	•	•								•		
Major proposals within 250m of a pond/ lodge or Minor proposals within 100m of pond Where known records for great crested newt occur this should be 500m & 250m respectively. (Note: A major proposals is one that is more than 10 dwellings or more than 0.5 hectares or for non-residential development is more than 1000m ² floor area or more than 1 hectare)					•								
Proposals affecting or within 50m of rivers, streams, lakes, or other aquatic habitats (including ponds and lodges).	•		•	• **		•			•			•	
Proposals affecting or within 100m of a canal	•		•			•			•			•	• ***
Proposals affecting 'derelict' land (brownfield sites), allotments and railway land.			•		•					•	•		
Proposals affecting bare ground and/or sparsely vegetated sites, wherever they are located							•	•					
Proposals on upland/moorland sites (e.g. wind farms)	•	•	•			•			•	•	•	•	
Proposed development affecting any buildings, structures, feature or locations where <u>protected species are known to be present</u> *.	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	• ***
<p>* Confirmed as present by either a data search (for instance via GMEU/local environmental records centre) or as notified to the developer by the local planning authority or GMEU and/or by Natural England, the Environment Agency or other nature conservation organisation.</p> <p>** Advice should be sought from GMEU on when wintering bird surveys will be required. Not all lakes or rivers will require this survey.</p> <p>*** Additional surveys such as shading studies will also be required where floating water plantain is confirmed (see GMEU website for further information (http://www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit)).</p>	Bats	Barn Owls	Breeding Birds	Wintering Birds	Great Crested Newt	Otters	Black redstart	Little ringed plover	Water Vole	Badgers	Reptiles	White-clawed crayfish	Aquatic plants incl. Floating water plantain, Grasswack pondweed & Freiberg's screw-moss

Part 2 – Local Requirements for Designated Sites and Priority Habitats

If the application is likely to affect any of the designated sites, priority habitats or biodiversity features listed in **Table 2**, a survey and assessment for the relevant feature must be submitted with the application. Exceptions to when a survey and assessment may not be required are also explained below. The **Survey** should be undertaken and prepared by competent persons with suitable qualifications and experience and must be carried out at an appropriate time and month of year (see Table 3); in suitable weather conditions and using nationally recognised survey guidelines/methods where available. The survey may be informed by the results of a search for ecological data from a local environmental records centre or GMEU. The survey must be to an appropriate level of scope and detail and must:

- Record which habitats and features are present on and where appropriate around the site;
- Identify the extent/area/length present;
- Map their distribution on site and/or in the surrounding area shown on an appropriate scale plan.

The **Assessment** should identify and describe potential development impacts likely to harm designated sites, priority habitats, other listed biodiversity features or geological features (these should include both direct and indirect effects both during construction and afterwards). Where harm is likely, evidence must be submitted to show:

- How alternative designs or locations have been considered;
- How adverse effects will be avoided wherever possible;
- How unavoidable impacts will be mitigated or reduced;
- How impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated will be compensated.

Proposals affecting an international site are also likely to need a Habitats Regulations Assessment. Additional advice on this process can be obtained from Natural England or GMEU.

In addition, proposals are to be encouraged that will enhance, restore or add to designated sites, priority habitats and/or other biodiversity features. The Assessment should give an indication of likely change in the area (hectares) of priority habitat on the site after development e.g. whether there will be a net loss or gain. An ecological/geological survey and assessment may form part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment.

The results of the habitat assessment may identify the need to undertake further surveys for protected/priority species.

Exceptions When a Full Survey and Assessment May Not Be Required

International and National Sites: A survey and assessment will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with Natural England, where the latter confirms in writing that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any statutory sites designated for their national or international importance.

Regional and Local Sites and Priority Habitats: A survey and assessment will not be required where the applicant is able to provide copies of pre-application correspondence with the Local Planning Authority's ecologist (where employed), or GMEU that they are satisfied that the proposed development will not affect any regional or local sites designated for their local nature conservation importance or any other priority habitats or listed features.

**TABLE 2 Local Requirements for Designated Sites and Priority Habitats
Criteria (Trigger List) for When a Survey and Assessment are Required**

1. DESIGNATED SITES (as shown on the Council's Development Plan Proposals Map)	
Internationally designated sites	Special Protection Area (SPA) Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)* Ramsar Site – (none currently in Greater Manchester)
Nationally designated sites	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) National Nature Reserve (NNR)
Regionally and locally designated sites	Local Sites - Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
2. UK PRIORITY HABITATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows ▪ Lowland heathland and/or dry acid grassland ▪ Lowland meadows (e.g. species-rich flower meadows) ▪ Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland) ▪ Lowland raised bog or Upland blanket bog ▪ Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land ▪ Ponds (as defined by UK BAP) ▪ Reedbeds ▪ Rivers and streams (e.g. headwaters, natural stream courses) ▪ Standing open water and canals* (e.g. lakes, reservoirs, mill lodges, ponds) - Eutrophic standing water ▪ Upland heathland ▪ Upland flushes, fens & swamps ▪ Upland woodlands (e.g. oakwoods, and birchwoods) ▪ Wet woodland ▪ Wood-pasture and parkland 	
3. OTHER BIODIVERSITY FEATURES	
<p>A full list of Greater Manchester Biodiversity Habitats and Species can be found at http://www.gmbp.org.uk/site/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1.</p>	

* Developments affecting the Rochdale Canal SAC and other canals supporting floating water plantain will require additional surveys such as shading studies (see GMEU website for further information (<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit>)).

TABLE 3 ECOLOGICAL SURVEY SEASONS

Key: Optimal Survey Time ■ Extending into □

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Badgers		■	■	■	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
Bats (Hibernation Roosts)	■	■	■								■	■
Bats (Summer Roosts)				□	■	■	■	■	■	□		
Bats (Foraging/Commuting)				□	■	■	■	■	■	□		
Birds (Breeding)			■	■	■	■	□	□				
BIRDS (Over Wintering)	■	■									■	■
Great-Crested Newts			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	□		
				AQUATIC			TERRESTRIAL					
Otters	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Reptiles			■	■	■	■			■			
Water Voles			□	■	■	■	■	■	■	□		
White-Clawed Crayfish							■	■	■			
Habitats/Vegetation			Woods	■	■	■	■	■	■			

Points to note regarding surveys are as follows:

- For certain species and habitats surveys can be carried out at any time of year, but for other species, particular times of year are required to give the most reliable results, as indicated in Table 3
- Surveys conducted outside of optimal times (Table 3) may be unreliable. For certain species (e.g. Great Crested Newt) surveys over the winter period are unlikely to yield any useful information and are unlikely to be accepted. Similarly negative results gained outside the optimal period should not be interpreted as absence of a species and further survey work maybe required during the optimal survey season. This is especially important where existing surveys and records show the species has been found previously on site or in the surrounding area. An application may not be valid until survey information is gathered from an optimum time of year.
- Species surveys are also very weather dependent so it may be necessary to delay a survey or to carry out more than one survey if the weather is not suitable, e.g. heavy rain is not good for surveying for otters, as it washes away their spraint (droppings). Likewise bat surveys carried out in wet or cold weather may not yield accurate results.
- Absence of evidence of a species does not necessarily mean that the species is not there, nor that its habitat is not protected (e.g. a bat roost is protected whether any bats are present or not).
- GMEU/ Environmental Records Centre may have useful existing information and records.
- Competent ecologists should carry out any surveys. Where surveys involve disturbance, capture or handling of a protected species, then only a licensed person (e.g. issued by Natural England) can undertake such surveys. Surveys should follow published national or local methodologies. Further details may be found in the Local Authority’s SPD for Biodiversity or on the following web sites:
 IEEM at: (<http://www.ieem.org.uk/Publications.htm> - Guidelines for Survey Methodology)
 Natural England: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/default.htm>