

[Home](#) > [Environment](#) > [Wildlife, animals, biodiversity and ecosystems](#)
> [Protected sites and species](#) > [Land species](#)

Guidance

Bats: advice for making planning decisions

How to assess a planning application when there are bats on or near a proposed development site.

From: [Natural England](#)
([/government/organisations/natural-england](#))

Published 14 January 2022

Applies to England

Contents

- — [How bats are protected](#)
- — [When to ask for a survey](#)
- — [Assess the effect of development on bats](#)
- — [Site management and monitoring](#)

This is Natural England's 'standing advice' for bats. It is a material planning consideration for local planning authorities (LPAs). You should take this advice into

Related content

[Prepare a planning proposal to avoid harm or disturbance to protected species](#)
([/guidance/prepare-a-planning-proposal-to-avoid-harm-or-disturbance-to-protected-species](#))

[Bats: protection and licences](#) ([/guidance/bats-](#)

account when making planning decisions. It forms part of a collection of [standing advice for protected species](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications#standing-advice-for-protected-species) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications#standing-advice-for-protected-species>).

Following this advice:

- avoids the need to consult on the negative effects of planning applications on bats in most cases
- can help you make decisions on development proposals

You may need a qualified ecologist to advise you on the planning application and supporting evidence. You can find one using either the:

- [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environment Management \(CIEEM\) directory](https://events.cieem.net/RegisteredPracticeDirectory/Registered-Practice-Directory.aspx) (<https://events.cieem.net/RegisteredPracticeDirectory/Registered-Practice-Directory.aspx>)
- [Environmental Data Services directory](https://www.endsdirectory.com/) (<https://www.endsdirectory.com/>)

Qualified ecologists should follow the:

- [bat survey guidelines](https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/guidance-for-professionals/bat-surveys-for-professional-ecologists-good-practice-guidelines-3rd-edition) (<https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/guidance-for-professionals/bat-surveys-for-professional-ecologists-good-practice-guidelines-3rd-edition>) on the Bat Conservation Trust website
- [bat mitigation guidelines](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605171643/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/69046?category=31008) (<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605171643/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/69046?category=31008>)

How bats are protected

All bat species are designated and protected as European protected species (EPS). EPS are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

It is an offence to:

[protection-surveys-and-licences](#))

[Reptiles: advice for making planning decisions](#)
([/guidance/reptiles-advice-for-making-planning-decisions](#))

[Great crested newts: district level licensing for local planning authorities](#)
([/guidance/great-crested-newts-district-level-licensing-for-local-planning-authorities](#))

[Otters: advice for making planning decisions](#)
([/guidance/otters-advice-for-making-planning-decisions](#))

Detailed guidance

[Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities](#)
([/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications](#))

- deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture them
- damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places (even when bats are not present)
- possess, control or transport them (alive or dead)

It is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb bats while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection
- obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection

Several species of bats are [listed as rare and most threatened species](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4958719460769792) (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4958719460769792>) under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). You must have regard for the conservation of Section 41 species as part of your planning decision.

Find out more about your [biodiversity duty](#).

The developer must comply with the legal protection of bats.

You should consider if the developer has taken appropriate measures to avoid, mitigate and, as a last resort, compensate for any negative effects on bats in their development proposal.

The developer may need a wildlife licence to carry out their proposal.

When to ask for a survey

You should ask for a survey if a development proposal is likely to negatively affect bats or their:

- roost habitats
- foraging habitats
- commuting habitats

A survey is needed if one or more of the following applies:

- distribution and historical records suggest bats may be present - you can [search the National Biodiversity Network Atlas \(https://nbnatlas.org/\)](https://nbnatlas.org/) by species and location
- the development site includes [buildings or other built structures](#), [underground structures](#) or [trees](#) that provide roosting opportunities for bats
- the proposals include flood lighting of buildings or green space close to habitats that bats tend to use
- the proposals are close to water bodies, quarries or natural cliff faces
- it is a [wind farm proposal](#) close to a site designated for bats or close to habitats that bats use for commuting and foraging

Absence of a record does not mean there are no bats. It could mean there is no survey data available for that location.

You must check if the ecologist holds the appropriate and up-to-date survey licence to carry out surveys for bats. CIEEM publishes:

- [competencies required for species surveys \(https://cieem.net/resource/competencies-for-species-survey-css/\)](https://cieem.net/resource/competencies-for-species-survey-css/)
- advice on the [valid age of data \(https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf\)](https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf)

The ecologist should also follow the Biodiversity code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013) available on the [British Standards Institute website \(https://www.bsigroup.com/en-gb/standards/\)](https://www.bsigroup.com/en-gb/standards/). These documents may not be accessible to assistive technology.

Bats in buildings

Construction, demolition, extension or conversion proposals could affect a bat roost in a building or barn. You should ask for a survey where roosts are likely if the building or barn:

- has little or no disturbance from artificial lighting

- is close to woodland or water
- has uneven roof tiles and large roof timbers
- has cracks, crevices and small openings
- has a roof that warms in the sun with a large roof space for flying
- has hanging tiles or timber cladding on south-facing walls and has not been used for several years

Bats underground

Excavation for development could affect bats roosting underground. You should ask for a survey where roosts are likely if the underground site:

- is close to woodland or water, or quarries and old mine workings
- is large enough to maintain a low and stable temperature in winter
- is humid
- has cracks, crevices and rough surfaces

Bats in trees

Tree felling for development could affect a bat roost. You should ask for a survey where roosts are likely if the tree:

- is within [ancient woodland](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions>) or parkland
- is deciduous
- is large and irregular (although individual bats are frequently found in smaller trees)
- has natural cavities, most commonly ash, beech or oak
- is damaged by rot, weathering, woodpeckers or lightning - it can be dead
- has loose bark
- is covered in dense ivy

Wind farm proposals

Wind turbines can affect bats. They can fly into the tower or blades, or suffer from air pressure changes (known as barotrauma) if they're located on commuting or foraging routes.

You should ask for a survey if a wind turbine proposal is:

- more than 250 kilowatts (kW) and located near to a site designated for bat populations located within the impact risk zone (IRZ) of a special area of conservation (SAC) or site of special scientific interest (SSSI) - you can [find IRZs](https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx?chosenLayers=sssiirzIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=541730:178232:630140:221982&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false) (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx?chosenLayers=sssiirzIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=541730:178232:630140:221982&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>) on Defra's Magic Map
- more than 250kW and located within 50m of features like woodland, hedgerows, canals, rivers, lakes, caves, mines or structures that bats might use

Read the guidance for developers, planners and ecological consultants in [Bats and onshore wind turbines: survey, assessment and mitigation](https://www.nature.scot/doc/bats-and-onshore-wind-turbines-survey-assessment-and-mitigation) (<https://www.nature.scot/doc/bats-and-onshore-wind-turbines-survey-assessment-and-mitigation>). The guidance applies to onshore wind energy developments. It's not intended for use with single wind turbines, micro installations (under 50kW) or offshore wind farms.

What to survey for

To inform the planning proposal so it can avoid harming bats as much as possible, surveys must:

- be carried out in the most recent, appropriate season - except if [licensing policy 4](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/european-protected-species-policies-for-mitigation-licences#policy-4-) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/european-protected-species-policies-for-mitigation-licences#policy-4->

[alternative-sources-of-evidence-to-reduce-standard-survey-requirements](#)) is used

- identify the bat species and size of population
- identify the type of roost and its importance, and any access points used by bats to enter the roost
- identify important flight routes and foraging areas used by bats close to proposed developments

Survey work can include:

- roost inspection
- recording site emergence or re-entry
- recording bat activity and back-tracking
- trapping and radio tagging

Assess the effect of development on bats

Where possible proposals should avoid affecting bats. Where this is not possible, you should look for adequate mitigation or compensation measures in the planning proposal to allow you to make a planning decision.

Species vulnerability

The effect of a proposal on a bat population will need to consider the predicted level of impact based on the:

- conservation status of the bat species affected
- importance of the site for bats at a local and national level

For example, Bechstein's bat is rare and found in southern England and south east Wales, therefore proposals in these areas could be very significant to the national population of this species. Common pipistrelle are the most common and widespread bat species. The effect of a proposal would be less significant to its national population.

For information about bat species, their distribution and conservation status, read the [factsheets on each UK bat species](https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/what-are-bats/uk-bats) (<https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/what-are-bats/uk-bats>) provided by the Bat Conservation Trust.

Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures

To avoid possible effects on bats and their roosts, developers could redesign the proposal to:

- leave bat roosts in place
- alter the timing of works
- change the methods of working

Where this is not possible, you should look for mitigation and compensation measures that are proportionate to the likely effect on the bat species present. The proposal could:

- keep some existing roof voids and roosting places
- create new roosting places within the existing building
- create new roosting places in different buildings
- redesign lighting to avoid roost entrances and foraging habitats

If the destruction of a bat roost is unavoidable, you must make sure:

- there is no net loss of roost sites
- roost types are replaced on a like-for-like basis
- the affected bat population can continue to function as before

For more information on mitigation plans and compensation measures, read the [planners guide for protected species and development](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications#agree-avoidance-mitigation-or-compensation-measures) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications#agree-avoidance-mitigation-or-compensation-measures>).

Planning and licence conditions

If the proposal is likely to affect bats, the developer must apply for a [bat mitigation licence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bats-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bats-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>).

Before you can grant planning permission, you must:

- make sure any mitigation or compensation conditions you impose do not conflict with the requirements of a bat mitigation licence
- be confident that Natural England will issue a licence

You do not need to consult Natural England on the wording or discharge of any conditions you impose on a planning proposal. Natural England is unable to provide advice on this.

Enhance biodiversity

To meet your [biodiversity duty](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity>), you should suggest ways for the developer to:

- create new or enhanced habitats on the development site
- achieve a [net gain in biodiversity](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#biodiversity) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#biodiversity>) through good design, such as green roofs, street trees or sustainable drainage

Site management and monitoring

You should consider the need for site monitoring and management. These measures are likely to be needed for a wildlife licence.

A site management and monitoring plan should make sure bat boxes and new roosts remain fit for purpose and accessible to bats.

Monitoring should be proportionate to the sensitivity of the bat species and the effect development would have on its population.

This can include carrying out management works to habitats and additional survey work to check that mitigation measures are working as intended, followed by remedial work if needed.

Published 14 January 2022

Explore the topic

[Land species \(/environment/planning-development-protected-sites-species-land-species\)](/environment/planning-development-protected-sites-species-land-species)

[Mammals \(/environment/environmental-management-wildlife-habitat-conservation-mammals\)](/environment/environmental-management-wildlife-habitat-conservation-mammals)

OGI

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated

[© Crown copyright](#)