



Kent Wildlife Trust



General planning advice

Did you know that you can take action to persuade planners and decision makers to protect and enhance wildlife in your local area?

This information sheet has been provided in order to help give you a quick understanding of the planning process, what our involvement in the planning process is and how you can take appropriate action.

The planning process in a nutshell:

Planning helps to produce sustainable development and the planning system is there to ensure developments are in the public interest and have a positive effect for people, the environment and the economy¹.

There can be significant impacts on wildlife if developments are poorly planned. With careful planning and implementation, development can have a positive effect on wildlife and deliver valuable biodiversity gains for wildlife and actually help to protect, enhance and create valuable wildlife habitats.

The planning application process:

- A planning application will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- The application is publicised around the site area and will be on the LPA's website.
- Comments are invited by a specified deadline.
- The application will be determined by the planning authority and consider comments made in the context of local and national planning policy
- Documents including all comments are publicly available to see on the LPA's website. The process should take about 8 weeks from the date of the submission of the application, but can take longer; and
- Applicants can appeal the decision on their application if they disagree with the decision.

Planning applications will either be a Full or Outline application. An outline application will be less detailed, whereas a full planning permission application will contain detailed plans. If an outline application is granted, a full application will eventually need to be applied for. Please note that large scale developments will take longer to be considered.

The planning application should describe the proposed development's size and location, its functions and relationship with the immediate surroundings. These are called the material considerations that the decision makers look at when determining the application.

Our role in the planning process:

¹ National Planning Policy Framework – Communities and Local Government [2012]

The Kent Wildlife Trust is a non-statutory consultee and will respond to planning applications and strategic plans and we support, influence and facilitate positive planning for wildlife at county, unitary, district and neighbourhood level. As a non-statutory consultee, we cannot force others to listen to our views, however, we are committed to working in partnership with Local Planning Authorities to ensure that wildlife is considered with due priority within the planning system and decisions are as environmentally sustainable as possible. As a non-statutory organisation, we cannot force others to listen to our views. Local Authorities have an obligation to protect wildlife and ensure that this is taken into account in their decision making.

The Trust will:

- comment on large scale planning applications, where there is potential for significant negative impacts on wildlife;
- provide our input into national, regional and local policy documents as well as individual planning applications;
- work to ensure that potential impacts on wildlife have been considered and appropriate policies are in place to protect wildlife;
- seek to be consulted on individual planning proposals where there is a significant impact on biodiversity either negatively or positively;
- seek to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity;
- help local authorities design policies that provide efficient and comprehensive protection for wildlife;
- use our knowledge of ecology, biodiversity and nature conservation issues and our knowledge of law, policy, guidance and practice in order to provide the best possible advice;
- seek to ensure that at all levels of the planning process, planning is creating/re-creating and enhancing wildlife habitats; re-creating connections between existing areas of habitat (green infrastructure); and promoting features in its design which benefit wildlife and reduce the impact on the environment by mitigating any negative effect of development;
- offer advice to the public on how they can be involved in the planning process and make comment on individual planning applications; and
- provide advice to planners, individuals, applicants and consultants on planning matters affecting wildlife.

You can learn more about how we engage with the planning process in the Kent Wildlife [Trust's Planning Policy](#)

What we cannot do:

Due to limited time and resources, the Kent Wildlife Trust cannot respond to every planning application. We are also limited in what we can do because we do not deal with all planning and wildlife matters, for example: wildlife crime and enforcement of planning cases. The Trust has a priority hierarchy in order to ensure that our time is spent dealing with the issues which will have the most impact on wildlife. Animals such as rabbits and foxes for example, are not protected species (which is our priority) so they carry less weight when we comment on planning applications. We appreciate that this means we cannot always comment on applications which will be of great concern to our members, but we can support and provide advice on helping you to take action.

What you can do:

- The Trust makes every effort to keep up to date on planning applications in the county, but we do not get to hear about everything so please let us know if you think a particular application will have a significant impact on wildlife;

- Anyone can comment on a planning application, but if you wish to do so, it is best to be prepared and have as much supporting information as possible in order to make an impact and ensure that your opinion is presented in an effective, formal and polite way;
- Take note of the planning application reference which will be something like XXX/2014/01234;
- Try to gain as much information about the proposed development as possible which can be done by reading the planning application and supporting documentation. You can use the above planning reference to search for the application on the LPA's website or contact the planning officer and request to view the planning application. They can make a copy (which might be at a charge);
- If you feel that you need to comment on an application, you can do so via the [Planning Portal](#) (often referred to as "Public Access" in Kent) or write to the planning officer directly;
- Planning officers will take into account matters of "[material consideration](#)" so ensure that the issues raised are covered by policy and law; There are laws protecting species, some sites and habitats. For further information please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>;
- Make sure you know the deadline for commenting on the application and ensure your comments are received before then;
- You can try to gain support from local members of the community; and
- Contact your local MP, or contact the local Councillor for your area.

Remember, your opinion counts and Local Authorities have a duty to listen to your opinion and that of the public. It might be beneficial to be constructive and suggest ways that the developer could mitigate the damage or could enhance biodiversity through careful planning.

Please see the '[How to make your comments on a planning application](#)' document for further helpful information.

Wider reading:

- [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) which sets out the governments planning policies for England and how Local Planning Authorities should be applying them
- [Localism Act 2002](#) – which took away power from central government and put the power into the hands of local government
- [National Environment and Rural Communities \(NERC\) Act 2006](#)
- [The Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: circular 06/2005](#)
- Your local authority website – policy documents and planning pages

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All information is provided to best of our knowledge and we believe to be accurate at the time of writing.



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