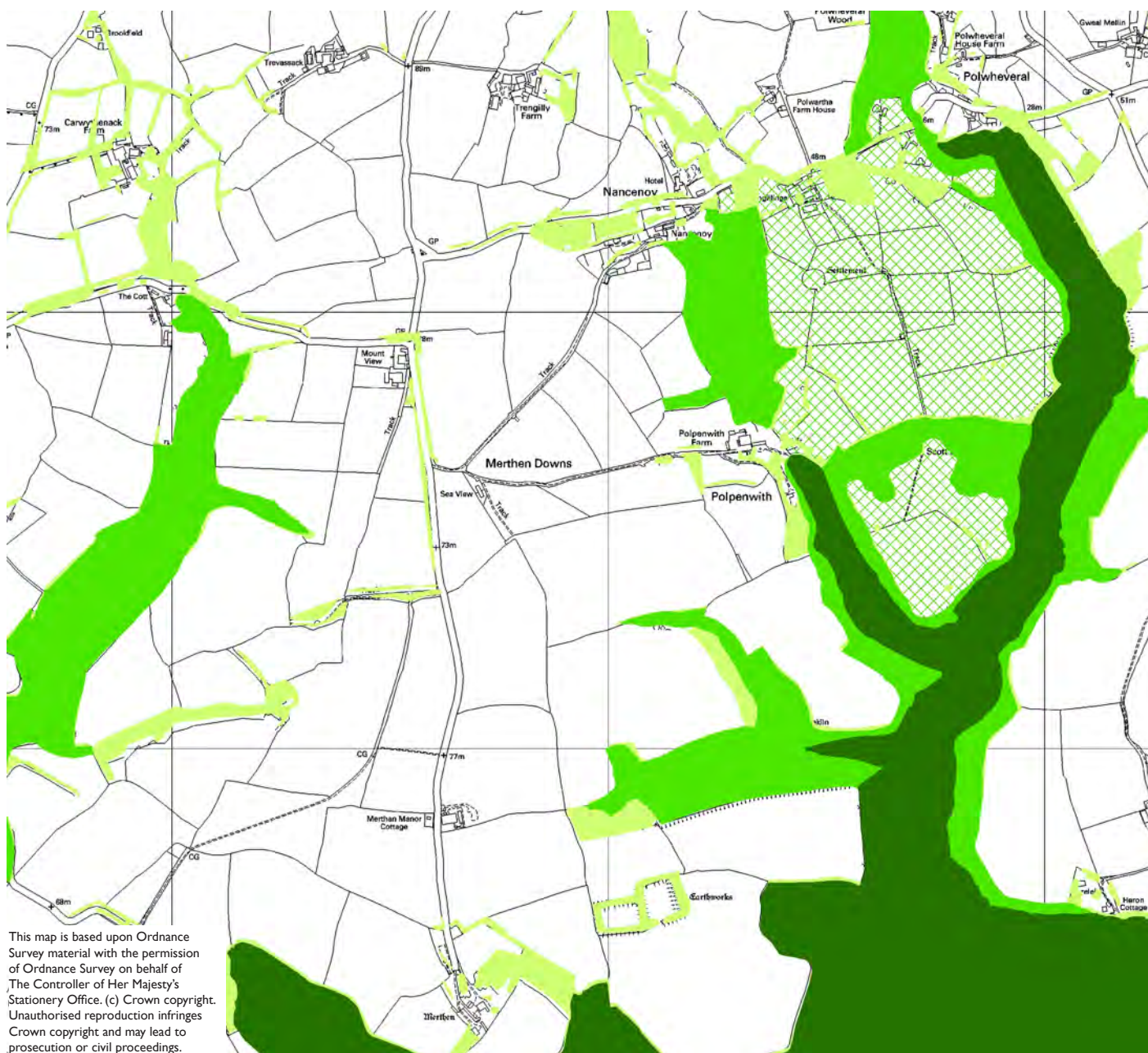




Wildlife Resource Map for Neighbourhood Planning

Guidance notes



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1 Introduction

Any development, from a loft conversion to a housing estate has the potential to affect wildlife. By wildlife we mean the whole range of plants and animals found in Cornwall (also referred to as biodiversity). Sites that are important for their geology can also be affected. The information below will enable you to site development where the impacts on wildlife will be minimal. Good design can further reduce impacts and can even enhance your area for wildlife.

2 Background information

2.1 Sites important for wildlife

There are several designations that cover sites of wildlife and geological value in Cornwall. These include sites with international and national statutory designation and local non-statutory designation and are shown on your map. **The best practice approach is to avoid locating development on designated sites.**

Your map shows:

Statutory designations in **dark green**; Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR).

Non-statutory designations in **mid-green**; County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and County Geological Sites (GGS).

Semi-natural habitat in **light green**.

This reflects the hierarchy of protection as laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Areas of land that we know are owned or managed by conservation organisations are also shown for your information.

Designated sites generally contain **semi-natural habitats**; these are areas which are not highly modified for example; rough grassland, woodland, traditional orchards, scrub, Cornish hedges, marshes and ponds, heathland, coastal habitats and old quarries and mine sites. Semi-natural habitats provide food and shelter for plants and animals, so tend to be richer in species than other areas. Some areas of semi-natural

habitat are designated as **Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats** which are recognised nationally as being important for wildlife. However, many areas of semi-natural habitat lie outside designated areas and are not classed as BAP habitat. These areas are nonetheless important for the plant and animal species they contain and as a link between other areas important for wildlife. Ideally **development will be sited to avoid areas of semi-natural habitat.**

What about the white areas?

The areas shown white on the map will still have wildlife issues associated with them, as explained in section 2.2 below. Your map gives an indication of where the most sensitive wildlife areas are located. When looking at the white areas with a view to allocating land for development you will need to consider all the other planning issues such as historic environment, landscape, transport, flood risk, land stability and contamination.

How you can use your local knowledge to add to the map

The semi-natural habitat information on your map is derived from aerial photographs, for this reason it is worth you **checking this information on the ground** as there may be patches of semi-natural habitat that have been missed.

Please note that **Cornish hedges** are not generally mapped.

You may have people in the Parish who can add information to the map. For example, surveys of Cornish hedges may highlight particular stretches that are very important for wildlife due to their function of linking areas of semi-natural habitats, their structure, age or the animal and plant species they contain. You may then decide not to allocate land adjacent to these hedges, or insist on them being buffered and that only existing gateways be used.

2.2 Wildlife species

There is a whole range of animal and plant species in Cornwall that are protected under national and/or international species protection legislation. Designated sites and other areas of semi-natural habitat are particularly rich in protected species but protected species are also often found outside designated sites. There are many other species which have no legal protection and a best practice approach would be to aim to enhance wildlife generally as part of a development, not just protected species.

The protected species groups that are particularly relevant to development in Cornwall are:

Bats are present across the county and have international protection. They feed on insects so are more likely to be found where there is **semi-natural habitat**. Bats also use linear features such as hedges and streams as navigation routes to travel to and from feeding areas and summer and winter roost sites. A whole range of **buildings and structures** can be used for breeding roosts and hibernation roosts. Bats are affected indirectly by **lighting associated with new developments** and some will desert roosts and foraging areas when there is light pollution.

Dormice are generally found throughout Cornwall but with a concentration in **central and eastern Cornwall**, they are particularly associated with woodland, scrub and hedge habitats, especially old or ancient boundaries.

Otters are present across the county associated with **rivers and streams** and have international protection. Otters will cross roads where their passage is blocked by culverts or flooding under bridges.

Badgers have national protection. They are found across the county in many habitats, they are **often affected by developments**. A licence is required if badgers are likely to be disturbed as part of a development.

Birds have differing levels of protection depending on the species. They must **not be disturbed during the nesting season** from early spring through the summer. New developments can include enhancements for birds such as nesting sites and appropriate planting schemes. In winter birds can congregate in large numbers on agricultural grassland that has **no designation and little semi-natural habitat**.

Amphibians and reptiles are generally associated with **semi-natural habitats and gardens**. Some amphibians and all reptiles have some protection. Careful site selection can minimise impacts. Hibernation sites are important in the winter months.

Rare and protected insects and other invertebrates are generally associated with designated sites and semi-natural habitats so **impacts can often be avoided by careful site selection**.

Flowering plants, fungi, lichens, liverworts, mosses and stoneworts. Many species in these groups are protected but these are **generally associated with designated sites and semi-natural habitats** so impacts can often be avoided by careful site selection.

In addition, **non-native invasive species** such as **Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed** and **Himalayan balsam** may be present and are likely to have a cost implication for developers since they may

need to be removed from a site. Removal of invasive species could be carried out as an enhancement for biodiversity either on or off-site.

Detailed species information is available from the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS). Please be aware that a lack of record does **not necessarily mean that a species is absent** from an area, just that it has not been recorded. It is likely that detailed species information and surveys will be required by developers when they are drawing up individual planning proposals.

Key principles to protect wildlife and geology in Neighbourhood Plans -

these can be written into Development policies in your plan:

- Avoid both **statutory** and **non-statutory** designated sites (shown in **dark green** and **mid-green** on your map)
- Avoid non-designated areas which contain large or linked areas of semi-natural habitat (shown in **light green** on your map).
- Consider the potential **protected species implications** of sites before finalising plans-it is far better to scope these at the outset to prevent costly delays later.

- Where sites contain patches of **semi-natural habitat** make sure these can be **retained and ideally linked** together as part of the intended end land use.
- Ensure there is potential to retain, restore and re-create **habitat linkages such as hedges** as part of developments.
- Look for **enhancement** opportunities to **create, expand, buffer and link semi-natural habitats** on-site.
- Consider the potential for **creating new semi-natural habitat off-site** if opportunities on-site are limited, this is known as 'biodiversity offsetting'. It may be possible to pool contributions from several developments.

Much more detail is available in the Biodiversity and Geological Conservation-Planning Good Practice Guidance for Cornwall http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=12898#planning_good_practice.

An ecological consultant can help to interpret data from ERCCIS and give recommendations for your neighbourhood plan. You can find an Ecological consultant here: www.cieem.net/members-directory/search.

