

## Guidance Note 34: BREEAM, CEEQUAL and HQM Ecology Risk Evaluation Checklist

*This guidance note is applicable for BREEAM, CEEQUAL and HQM schemes used in the UK which opened for registrations from 2018 onwards. Where the term Assessor is used in this document this refers to the BREEAM, CEEQUAL, HQM Assessor as relevant to the assessment taking place.*

### Scope and Applicability

This checklist must be completed by a project team member or other professionally qualified client representative with responsibility for site wide planning and decision making, along with appropriate supporting evidence. The checklist should not be completed and/or signed by the Assessor. Checklist answers must be based on an evaluation of the site prior to any site clearance or construction activities. This completed checklist will form part of the evidence required by the Assessor.

This checklist should be used to determine the assessment route (1 or 2) applicable to the project. It is a high level checklist which evaluates the risk to habitats and features of ecological value on the project site or within the zone of influence of the site. It does not provide a calculation of ecological value.

**If assessment route 2 is the first choice assessment route it is not necessary to complete this checklist.**

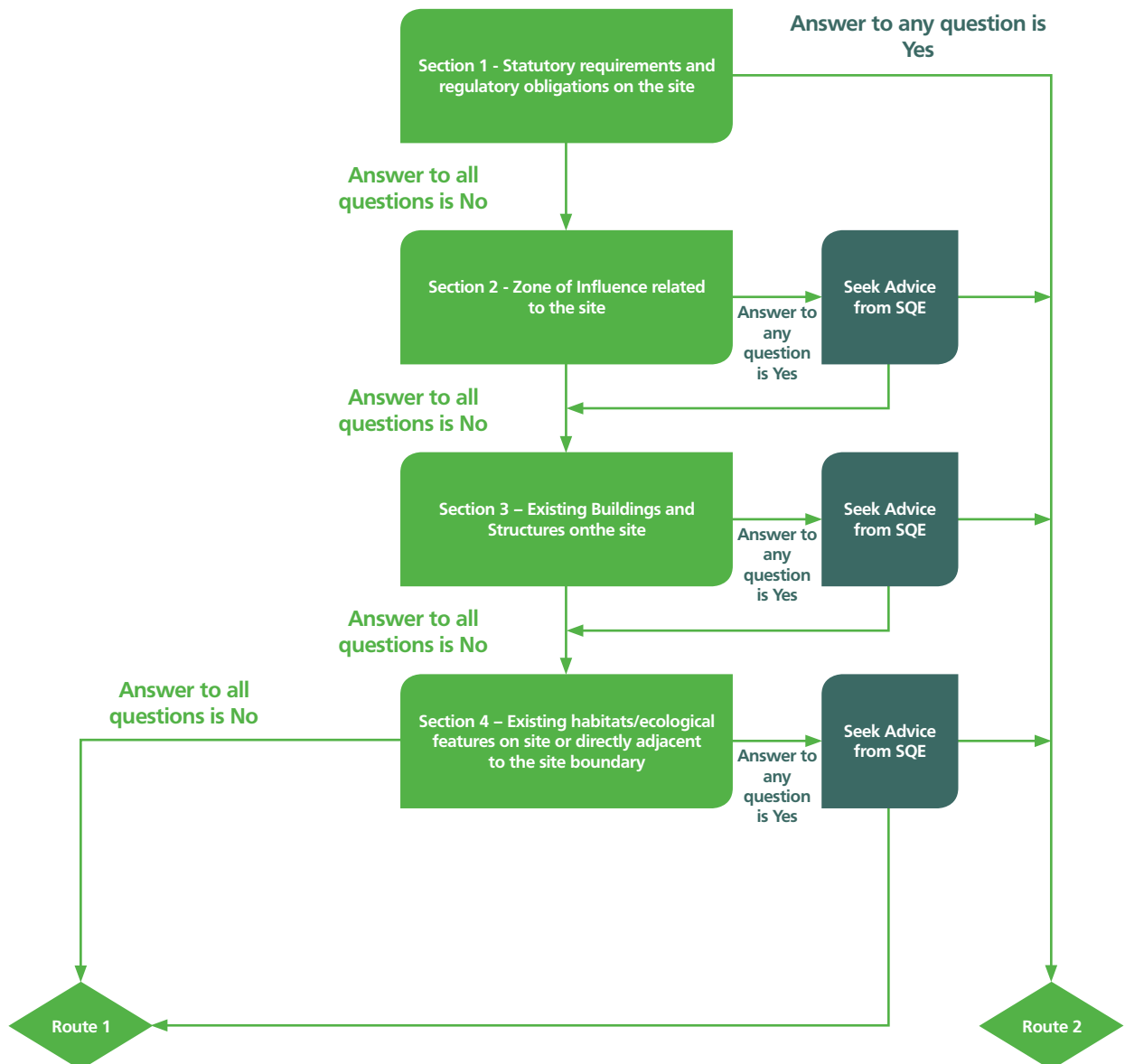
The checklist is structured in a way that identifies risks that require expert professional advice before the assessment route is selected. The nature of this service is outlined in the notes that follow the checklist<sup>4</sup>.

There are five sections in the checklist:

1. Statutory requirements and regulatory obligations
2. Zone of influence relating to the site
3. Existing buildings and structures on the site
  - a. Buildings or structures located on the site
  - b. Proposed works to existing buildings or structures
4. Existing habitats/ecological features on-site or directly adjacent to the site boundary
5. Signature (to be completed by a project team member or other professionally qualified client representative with responsibility for site wide planning and decision making where the checklist is used as evidence for the 'Identifying and understanding the risks and opportunities for the project' assessment issue for assessments using assessment route 1

The checklist process is outlined in the following diagram:

Figure 1: BREEAM, CEEQUAL and HQM Ecology Risk Evaluation Checklist Process Flow



Where outcomes of the checklist indicate that assessment route 1 is appropriate for the assessment, the completed checklist would be acceptable in lieu of a survey and evaluation. In these instances the completed checklist can be used to demonstrate compliance against the relevant assessment requirements in the 'Identifying and understanding the risks and opportunities for the project' assessment issue.

This checklist has been created for the purposes of the BREEAM assessment of this issue to provide an indicator of ecological risk. It does not seek to provide a measure of ecological value and should not be used by the project team, clients or others as guidance to provide an indication of possible ecological value of the area under assessment.

## Definitions: Assessment Routes 1 and 2

### Route 1: For sites where ecological opportunities and risks are limited in nature

This route is appropriate where the level of ecological risk associated with the site is of a level that can practically be understood and addressed by a project team member using general observation, non-specialist knowledge and publicly available resources and information. This should be determined by completing this Ecology Risk Evaluation Checklist. A lower level of reward is available for projects selecting this assessment route. This is as the ecological risks and benefits are lower and this route does not involve the same level of input and expertise that would be available through using a Suitably Qualified Ecologist.

### Route 2: For sites where ecological systems that do not meet the definition of Route 1 are likely to be present

This route allows for a more site specific and considered outcome and is the more comprehensive route of assessment. Therefore it can achieve a higher level of reward than Route 1. It must be conducted by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (see the "Identifying and understanding the risks and opportunities for the project" assessment issue for the definition of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist). This route is mandatory for all sites that do not meet the definition of Route 1 sites including more sensitive sites.

### BREEAM, CEEQUAL and HQM Ecology Risk Evaluation Checklist

Section	Questions	Y/N
1	<b>Statutory requirements and regulatory obligations on the site</b> This section identifies key statutory and regulatory requirements that would automatically require the use of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist.	
1a	Do statutory authorities require any of the following for the project? - ecological survey or statement to be prepared - an Environmental Impact Assessment - Strategic Environmental Assessment - an Ecological Impact Assessment - Habitat Regulation Assessment - Water Framework Directive assessment	Y/N
	If the answer to any question in section 1 is YES, assessment route 2 must be followed. If the answer to all questions in section 1 is NO, progress to section 2	
2	<b>Zone of Influence related to the site</b> The ecological value of a site impacts on the wider ecology in the area and cannot be seen in isolation from this. This section identifies local features that would require appraisal by an ecologist to determine the degree of risk arising from the development works.	
2a	Are any of the following major habitat types present within 100m of the site? 1 Broad-leaved/mixed-leaved woodland <sup>1</sup> 2 Scrub including heathland, moorland, bog/peatland (habitat/plants that thrive on acidic soils, such as heather and gorse) 3 Species rich grassland 4 Wetlands and surface water bodies (ditches, ponds, swales, lakes, marshland, fenland, reed bed etc.) natural or man made 5 Coastal habitats	Y/N
2b	Proximity to protected and ecologically significant areas	
2b i	Is the development within 500m of a non-statutory site, such as a Local Wildlife Site?	Y/N
2b ii	Is the development within 500m of a statutory site for example a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)?	Y/N

Section	Questions	Y/N
2b iii	Is the development within 2km of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar site?	Y/N
2b iv	Is the site located within 10 m of a land-sea interface?	Y/N
	If the answer to any question in section 2 is YES seek advice from a Suitability Qualified Ecologist <sup>4</sup> to determine whether Route 1 is appropriate. If the answer to all questions in section 2 is NO progress to Section 3	
3	<b>Existing Buildings and Structures on the site</b> Particular buildings can provide habitats for wildlife such as roosting spaces for legally protected birds and bats. This section identifies key building characteristics that present potential opportunities for wildlife that could be put at risk as a result of development activity.	
3a	Buildings or structures located on-site	
3a i	Are there any existing buildings or structures located on the site?	Y/N
3a ii	Do any of the structures on the site include: - Buildings or outbuildings with open access which could allow entry for wildlife (including but not limited to barns and other agricultural buildings, covered sheds/shelters, open industrial buildings)? - Structures containing spaces that are either uninhabited or are infrequently accessed by people? - Older buildings e.g. pre 1960? - Bridge like structures, aqueducts or viaducts? - Underground structures including but not limited to cellars, sunken enclosed spaces tunnels, natural or man-made caves, mine workings, culverts etc.? - Any buildings in a derelict or decayed state?	Y/N
	If the answer to question 3a ii is YES seek advice from a Suitability Qualified Ecologist <sup>2</sup> to determine whether Route 1 is appropriate. If the answer to all questions in section 3a is NO progress to Section 3b	
3b	Proposed works to existing buildings and/or structures	
3b i	Will the proposed works (including structural alteration, construction, refurbishment or deconstruction) affect existing buildings/structures on-site with ANY of the following features/materials: - Buildings with weatherboarding and/or hanging tiles? - Plain/day-tiled pitched roof? - Open soffits or soffits/eaves/gables with decayed boarding? - Open loft spaces? - Broken/loose roof tiles of any type? - Ridge tiles with decayed mortar jointing/bedding? - Dense climbing vegetation? - Agricultural or other buildings of traditional brick or stone construction and/or with exposed wooden beams greater than 20cm thick? - Buildings with turrets, clock/bell towers or similar structures? - Observable bird nests, bat roosts etc. internally or externally (identifiable through visual inspection, signs of ingress/egress etc.)? - A build-up of bird/bat droppings inside or outside? - Water management features including weirs, ponds, swales etc.?	Y/N
	If the answer to any question in section 3b is YES seek advice from a Suitability Qualified Ecologist <sup>4</sup> to determine whether Route 1 is appropriate. If the answer to all questions in section 3 is NO progress to Section 4	

Section	Questions	Y/N
4	<b>Existing habitats/ecological features on site or directly adjacent to the site boundary</b> This section identifies natural environments or features on or adjacent to the site which could be directly impacted or otherwise affected by the development works.	
4a	Are any of the following habitats/features present on the site? 1. Hedgerows, woodland blocks/belts or scrub connected to woodland or hedgerows 2. Brownfield sites where the site has been vacant/disused for 2 years or more and scrub vegetation covers more than 25% (canopy cover) of the total site area and is at least 300mm in height 3. Broad-leaved/mixed-leaved woodland <sup>1</sup> 4. Trees i. With a trunk diameter of more than 75 mm (measured at 1.5 metres above ground level ii. Designated as veteran trees or protected by Tree Preservation Orders/Group Preservation Orders iii. Which are mature with cracks, crevices and holes or with dense climbing plants such as ivy iv. Are any trees and hedgerows described above to be removed or is there likely to be building activity within 15 metres of a tree with a trunk diameter of more than 75mm (measured at 1.5 metres above ground level? 5. Permanent or seasonal open water courses (rivers, streams or canals) <sup>2</sup> 6. Scrub including heathland, moorland, bog/peatland (habitat/plants that thrive on acidic soils, such as heather and gorse) 7. Species rich grassland 8. Wetlands and surface water bodies (ditches, ponds, swales, lakes, marshland, fenland, reed bed) natural or man made 9. Coastal habitats 10. Conservation areas	Y/N
4b	Of the habitats and features identified on the site, will any be affected by the development works?	Y/N
4c	Are there any surface water bodies such as lakes, ponds, ditches, swales; - Within at least 20m of the site boundary or - directly connected through surface water runoff from areas of the site that are, or will be, developed?	Y/N
	If the answer to any question in section 4 is YES seek advice from a Suitability Qualified Ecologist <sup>2</sup> to determine whether you can proceed with the checklist and potentially Route 1 to determine whether this route is appropriate. If the answer to all questions in section 4 is NO Route1 can be used to demonstrate compliance.	
5	To be completed by a project team member or other professionally qualified client representative with responsibility for site wide planning and decision making where the checklist is submitted as evidence of compliance with the 'Identifying and understanding the risks and opportunities for the project' assessment issue	
	Name:	
	Signature:	
	Date:	
	On behalf of/representing:	

**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> The Countryside Survey defines woodland as 'having over 25% canopy cover of trees and shrubs, over a metre high'. Broad-leaved woodland should be taken to mean broad-leaved, mixed and Yew woodland.
- <sup>2</sup> The Countryside Survey defines the broad habitats of rivers and streams as running watercourses ranging from small headwater streams to large rivers. This broad habitat, along with wetlands, includes the open water itself and the vegetation along the water's edge.
- <sup>3</sup> The Countryside Survey defines a hedge as 'a line of woody vegetation that has been subject to management so that trees no longer take their natural shape.' <http://www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk> . Information on relevant priority habitats at national and local level can be found in the Local Biodiversity Action Plans in your area.
- <sup>4</sup> Where the checklist identifies a need to consult with a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) to determine whether or not Route 1 is appropriate, the ecologist would normally review basic pre development information on the site and outline development proposals as well as publicly available information on the local area in order to reach a considered view as to the ecological risks associates with the proposed works.
- a. Where these are deemed to be relatively insignificant due to the nature of the site, its location and the nature of development works being undertaken, the project may proceed using Route 1.
  - b. Where the SQE identifies risks to high value features and local ecosystems Route 2 will be required.