

Development threats to hedgehogs

If you are concerned about a proposed development which will have an impact on your local hedgehog population, this page provides some guidance on how to influence developers and the planning authority to achieve a good outcome.

Hedgehogs themselves are partially protected from being taken or killed under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, but there is no particular legal protection for their habitat. Consequently, arguments have to be presented to encourage sensitive development if there is a good population of hedgehogs on a proposed development site rather than opposing the development entirely.

Pre-application: Engaging with developer

If you are aware that a site has been earmarked for development but has not yet been formally submitted through the planning process, it is possible to contact the developer and make suggestions as to how the plans could be inclusive of the hedgehogs on site. Under the Localism Act 2011 there is a requirement for developers to carry out a pre-application consultation with local residents, so this could be an appropriate channel. Otherwise, the developer is likely to have contact details available on their website.

As the presence of hedgehogs alone will not be sufficient to prevent a successful planning application, it is better to convince the developer to make hedgehog-friendly modifications to their plans than to fight a losing battle against the development as a whole. These could include:

- Putting holes at suitable points in all new fences and walls to provide access for hedgehogs to all areas of the site
- Planting of native hedgerows across the development
- Providing log piles to increase nesting options for the hedgehogs
- Building a pond (with shallow sides for access) to provide water supply and insect food sources
- If the development includes communal areas, implementing a sensitive post-development management plan, such as carefully monitoring the use of garden machinery (such as strimmers) which can be lethal to hedgehogs and reducing chemical inputs

Some of the above will be of great amenity value to new residents or office workers, as will the continued presence of hedgehogs on the site. It is important to stress this point, as many developers will understandably be more interested in the benefits to the overall value of their development than implementing any strategies purely for hedgehog conservation. Many developers will also be keen to foster good relations with the existing local community, and so helping a treasured resident population of hedgehogs is a relatively easy way for them to achieve this.

Post-application: Engaging with local planning authority

If a planning application has been submitted, the local planning authority will welcome representations from local residents and interested parties regarding the proposals. Similar arguments to the pre-application technique can be used to persuade the planning authority to

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encourage the developer to make adjustments to their proposal. This process is carried out through local planning portals, where documents relating to each individual planning application are made publicly available.

To find your local planning authority and the application in question:

http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/wps/portal/genpub_LocalInformation

If you already know your local planning authority and the application reference number, a web search will bring you to the relevant planning portal page.

Planning authorities should take the following into account when making decisions and it is worth reminding them of these obligations in any representations regarding the application, pointing out that hedgehogs are in decline and that providing a coherent network for them can aid population recovery:

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species

Hedgehogs are listed as a UK priority species due to their continued population decline. Although the BAP scheme has been replaced by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework, the priority list is still used to inform wildlife priorities at various levels of governance across the UK and provide advice on good management practice. This does not, however, amount to legal protection.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act) 2006 contains a statutory duty: *“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”*

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

109 - The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures

Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Hedgehogs are listed in Appendix III of the Bern Convention (to which the UK is a signatory). This agreement recognised that *“wild flora and fauna constitute a natural heritage of aesthetic, scientific, cultural, recreational, economic and intrinsic value that needs to be preserved and handed on to future generations.”*

Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996

Prohibits cruel activities

Other recommendations:

Contact your local Wildlife Trust: Many Wildlife Trusts around the UK have dedicated planning officers or knowledge bases and it is possible that they have already engaged with the development site that near you and potentially already visited the site. They can also provide advice on mitigation for hedgehogs and other species at the site.

Contact Natural England: they manage the licence and mitigation process for species, although hedgehogs are only partially protected they will be able to provide some advice. The new [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website is not particularly user friendly but there are contact details for the licensing department of Natural England at the bottom of this webpage <https://www.gov.uk/construction-near-protected-areas-and-wildlife> - they may also be able to give advice on whether a licence has been issued for this site and the mitigation that has been agreed with the people carrying out the works.

Visit the PTES website: we have compiled various recommendations and advice on our own website for you to use, so please access that here: <https://ptes.org/planning-development-biodiversity/>

Responding to individual Applications:

Hedgehog Street do not normally respond to individual applications as we prefer to focus our efforts in ensuring that housing developers mitigate for hedgehogs in any development work that they do. This is because hedgehogs are only partially protected, objections along those lines are often disregarded.

However, we can provide a quote from Hedgehog Street that you can include in your own response to the application, where we can outline our strong concerns around hedgehog declines in the UK and that new housing developments put these at risk. We can also suggest various mitigation practises that can be adopted during development to ensure minimal disturbance or hedgehog-friendly features are included in the design of the new housing etc.

Quotation:

“Hedgehog numbers are rapidly declining nationally – with a third of the hedgehog population having been lost since the millennium – we aim to engage people in wildlife conservation as well as encouraging developers to help our prickly friends who are at risk from habitat disturbance or destruction.

Hedgehogs have been seen in the area of this development and are likely to be feeding and nesting in or around the development site. As they are at BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority species and partially legally protected, we would like to suggest that you take certain steps to mitigate for these animals in your development work:

- *Ensure adequate ecological surveys are undertaken to survey for hedgehogs in the area*
- *Mitigation should always seek to avoid direct mortality to the animals and disturbance of hibernating or breeding animals.*

- *Works taking place during October to March should be carefully undertaken to avoid injuring hibernating animals by undertaking works in suitable habitat slowly, being particular careful when using machinery within a foot of ground level or when removing brash/log piles.*
- *Additionally, mitigation should seek to reduce any potential fragmentation of habitats though the introduced of physical barriers to dispersal such as hardstanding, fences and artificial lighting. Modern fencing systems that extend to ground level, particularly those with concrete gravel boards, are impermeable to hedgehogs. Where feasible, fencing should be created without the use of concrete gravel boards. A 13 x 13cm gap in gravel boards or at the bottom of the fence allows hedgehogs to pass through. Hedges or hedgerows are preferable to fences to define property boundaries.*
- *Please avoid using fence netting unless 13cm off of the ground as this may cause entanglement and painful death for the hedgehog*
- *Piles of dead wood and brash piles can be provided to mitigate for the removal of suitable nesting sites. Scrub patches (particularly brambles) that provide suitable hibernation nesting habitat are thought to be a limiting resource for hedgehogs and small patches of this habitat may be used by many animals. Therefore, where an area of scrub is lost, efforts should be made to replant areas with scrubby native hedgerow species such as bramble and hawthorn.*
- *Management and maintenance practices should take into account the presence/potential presence of hedgehogs and leave leaf litter in place or in piles as well as leaving log or brash piles. Where possible, in any development the total area of hard standing should be minimised in favour of grassland or permeable 'living driveways'.*

Hedgehogs travel around one mile every night through parks and gardens in their quest to find enough food, nest sites and a mate. We suggest that for any new housing developments, Hedgehog 'highways' are cut in the garden fences of new homes to improve connectivity throughout the development and help protect this endangered species. Examples of this have been seen across numerous UK developers in the media, including [Barratt Homes/David Wilson Homes](#), [Russell Armer Homes](#), [Redrow Homes](#) and [Morris Homes](#) to name a few. If you are interesting in joining these and introducing simple solutions like 'Hedgehog Highways' into your developments please contact hedgehog@ptes.org and we can work together to bring these animals back from the brink."

- Emily Wilson, Hedgehog Officer at Hedgehog Street *(a joint campaign from the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society).*