Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Usability Testing
Apply for a badger licence (A24)

- Work Activity Details
- Permissions to Start Work
- Conservation Considerations

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Methodology

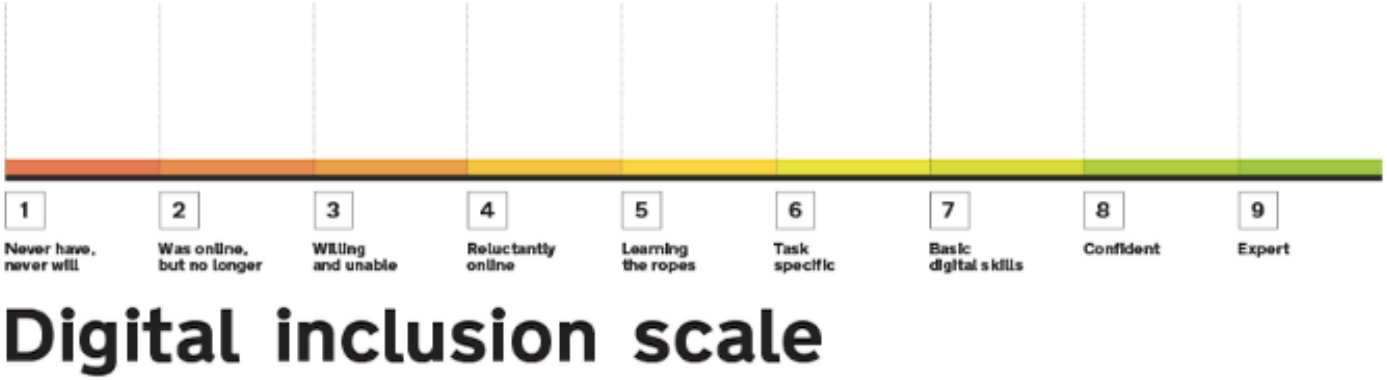
- 5 ecologists attended 1-to-1 usability testing sessions remotely.
- 4 male, 1 female
- Each session:
  - Ran for 60 - 75 mins
  - Started with a short background interview
  - Presented the prototype of the service and observed and listened whilst participants used the service
  - Carried out 3 task based activities to set context for 3 flows we wanted to test:
    1. Give work activity details
    2. Permissions to start work
    3. Conservation Considerations

Research Questions

- Do any of the questions/steps in the user flows **confuse people**?
- How **easy is it to fill out the form** and provide the information requested?
- Are there any problems with **navigating** through the flows?
- Are there any **options or information missing**?
- Does the **terminology** used make sense (hybrid, activity, next to)?

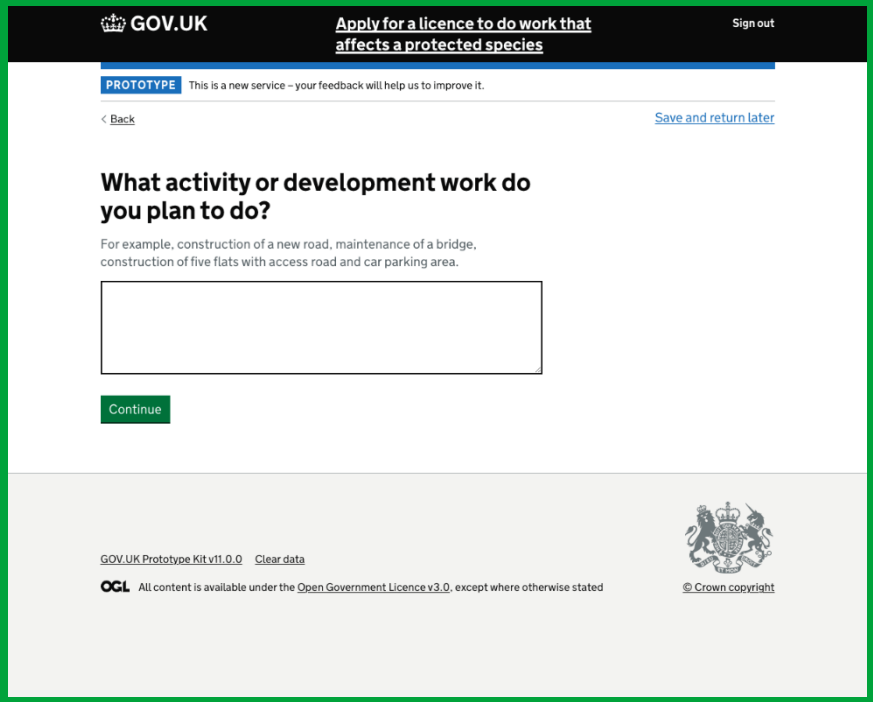
Who We Spoke To

No	Gender	Role/Experience	Digital/access needs
1	Male	Experience in applying for wildlife licences. Mainly deer. Retired.	
2	Male	Owns ecological consultancy. Applying for A24 licences since 2006. 22 years experience as an ecologist	
3	Female	Principal ecologist. 10 years experience. Not applied for A24 in last year.	
4	Male	Owns ecological consultancy. 16 years as an ecologist. Applied for A24 in last year.	Dyslexia
5	Male	Self employed ecologist. 33 years experience as an ecologist. Applied for A24 in last year.	• Digital Inclusion Scale(1-9). • Score = 5. *Learning the ropes* • May need help when they use digital services as they develop digital skills.



Work Activity Details

Scenario: I'd like you to imagine that you're working on a project for an individual householder. The work involves maintaining the structural integrity of a barn. There are badger setts that extend close to the barn.

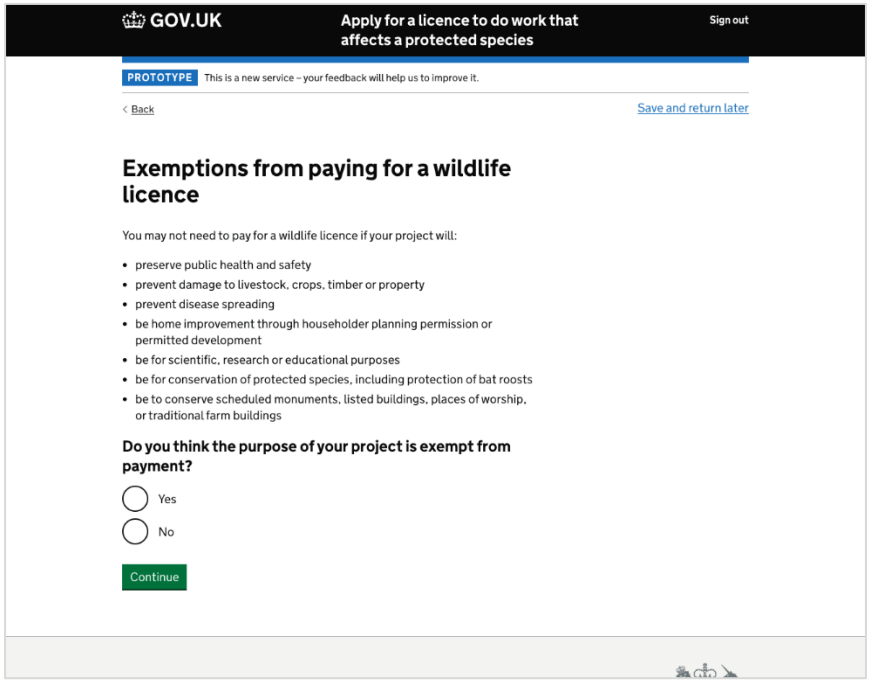


What activity or development work do you plan to do?

- Generally well understood.
- Users felt the wording for this question was intended for the client (developers), rather than ecologists
  - *“I'm planning to mitigate any impacts to the badgers. It's not me that's planning the development work - it's the client” P2*
- Some provided a brief response, while others were more detailed and accurate
  - *“To make sure it's as accurate as possible against what they're doing, I would copy and paste that in and maybe tweak it for readability…So person reading can see where the potential risk is and where we might disturb or impact badgers” P3*
  - *“Normally we keep this very, very brief because the planning permission and method statement we attach contains all the detail” P4*

Exemptions from paying for a wildlife licence

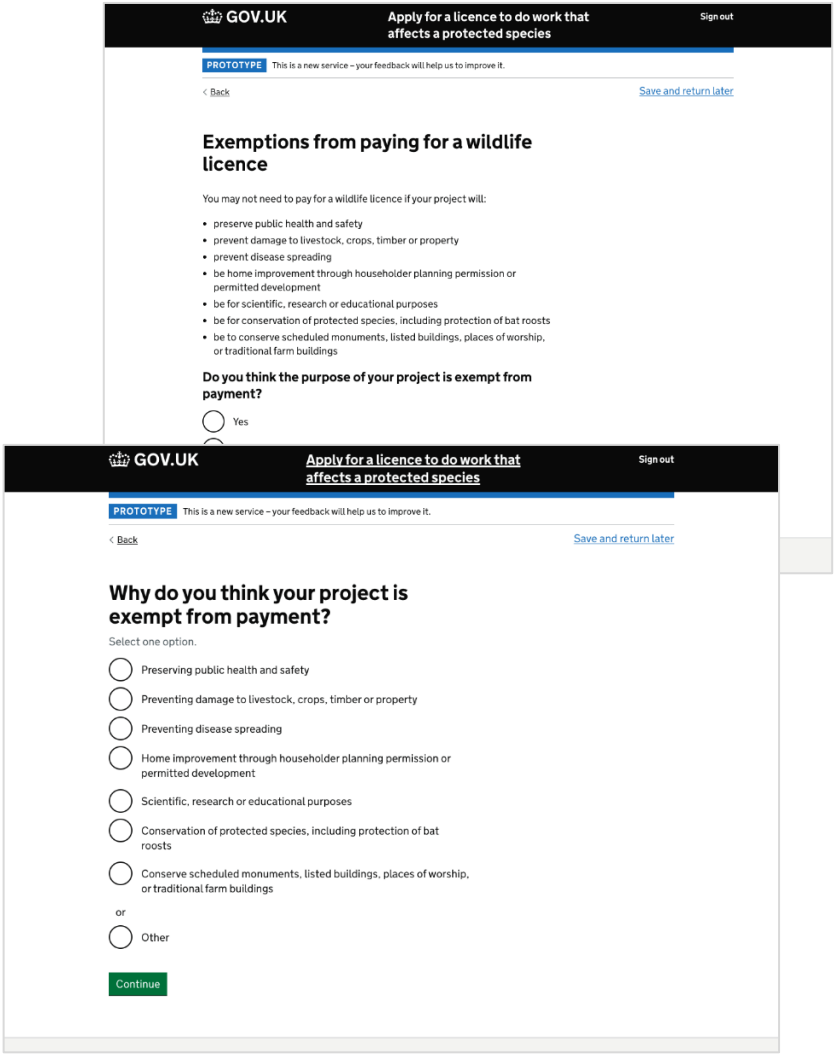
- Users understood this page lists the conditions for licence fee exemptions.
- The page was considered a helpful reminder of exemptions but…
- Perceived to be too wordy
  - *"I would say it wants to be condensed" – P1*
- Vague, generalised information caused confusion
  - Some items in the list apply to other licence types
  - No mention of A24



"It's not very specific, it just says wildlife licence…and these exemptions may apply to other licences. I think the A24 is the development related licence. Obviously things like livestock, that wouldn't apply. So that's really confusing."P3

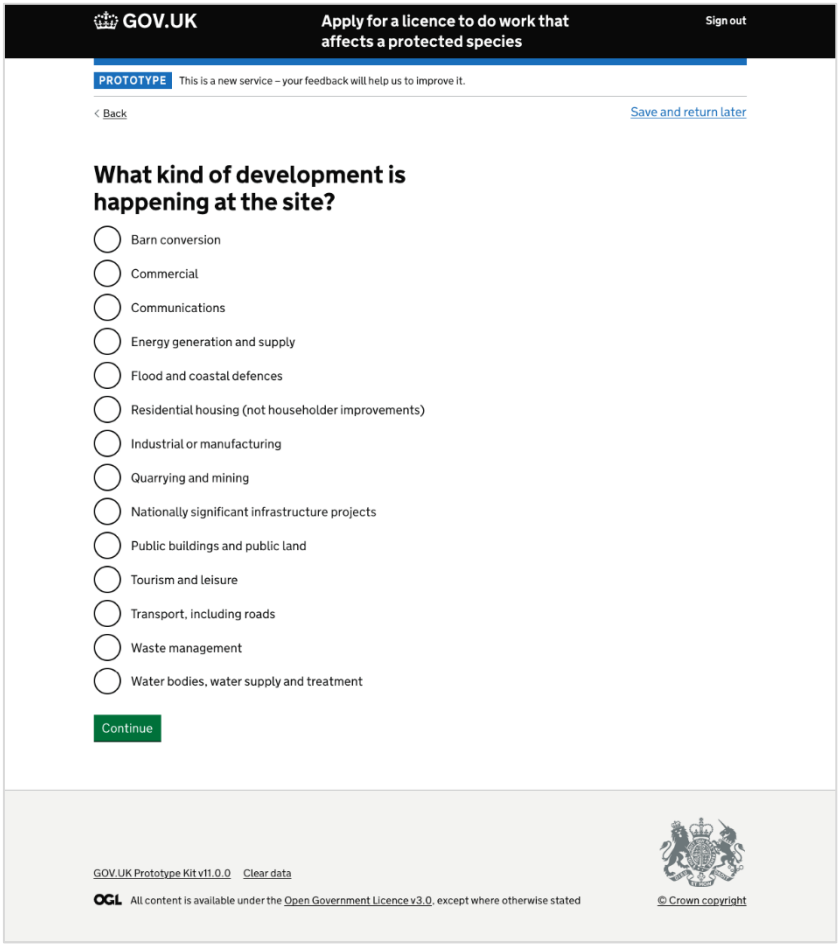
Select a reason for exemption

- Users considered the previous page to be redundant
  - *"You could almost skip the page before and then come straight to this one"* P1
  - *"You don't really need two pages, you just need one"* P4
- Selecting an option was difficult because:
  - Options not A24 licence specific
  - Multiple options could apply (bullets 2, 4, 7)
- Expectation to 'justify' selection
  - *"I think you should have to justify it a bit more. It's asking me the question and I've just selected an option, but it's not asking me for any other information to say why" P3*



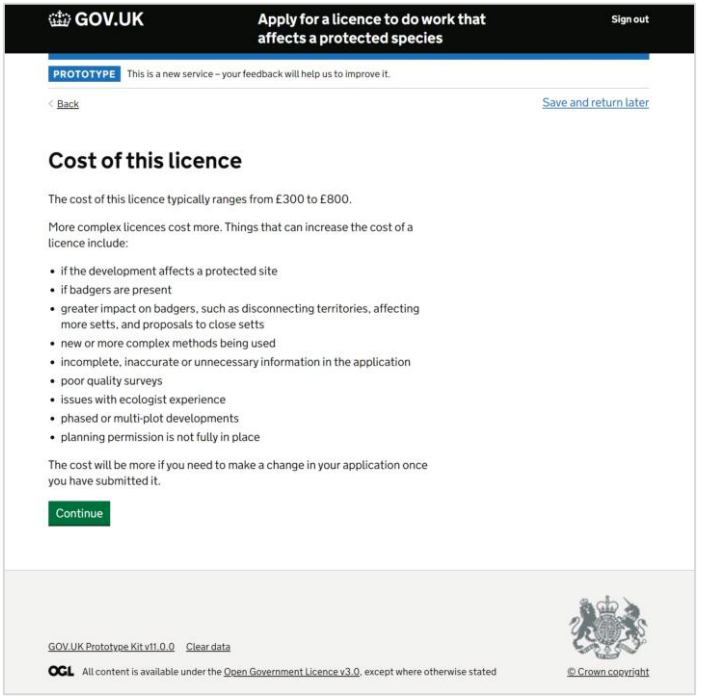
What kind of development is happening at the site?

- Selecting an option was challenging due to certain factors:
    - Some options too broad and ‘undefined’ (Commercial, Industrial or Manufacturing)
        - *“Industrial and Manufacturing - that's quite a wide term, what does that mean? Does that mean the construction of a new factory?”* P2
    - Some options too specific (barn conversion)
- Users indicated they would make an educated guess or seek assistance by calling someone
    - *“I would just stop and I would phone Natural England and say I can’t progress with this form…there’s no point ticking something that is incorrect because you then embed incorrect information further into the form” P4*
    - *“If I'm honest, I'd just take a best guess” P3*



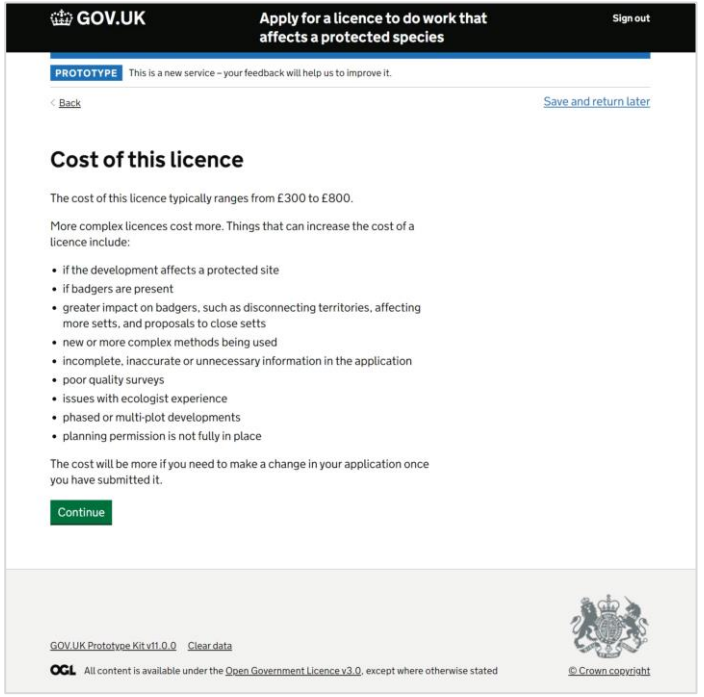
Cost of this licence

- The cost page was unexpected and caused users to question whether they were applying for the right licence. Some said they would abandon the task altogether at this point.
    - *“At this point I would be unsure about whether to continue or not because it would feel like I was just about to be charged for something that I was told wouldn't be chargeable...it might stop me from clicking continue” P2*
    - *“If I thought we were going down the free licencing road, I would be worried about seeing this, especially seeing the continue button…I'll be worried about…am I going to have to pay for this now?” P1*
    - *“It makes me question things…have I got the right licence?” P3*
- The range for the cost of the licence (£300 to £800) considered to be unhelpful.
    - *“It's not always good enough for me to simply signpost them and say, well, you'll get some kind of charge for this. I don't know what it is. I need to help them manage that process and manage their budget and manage their understanding of it. So working with ranges is not overly helpful.” P2*
    - *“It says the cost of this licence typically ranges from £300 to £800. That's confusing. If you're going to have different costs for the same licence but for different things, I think that needs to be made very clear.” P3*



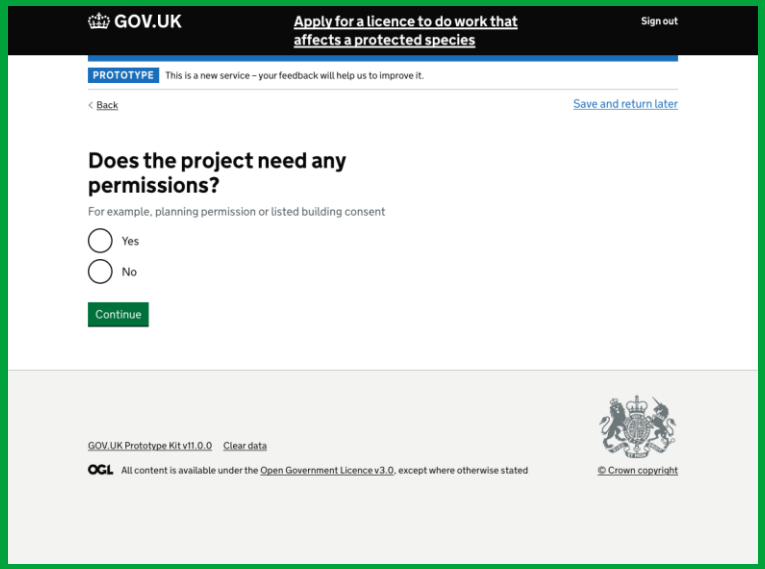
Cost of this licence

- Some items in the list perceived to be odd or irrelevant
  - *“If badgers aren’t present, then there’s no need for a licence. So that would be a funny thing that would increase the cost of a licence” P2*
  - *“That’s a silly option [if badgers are present]. If there’s no badgers, there’s no licence...None of these are really relevant if I’m honest, because they don’t reflect this licence” P4*



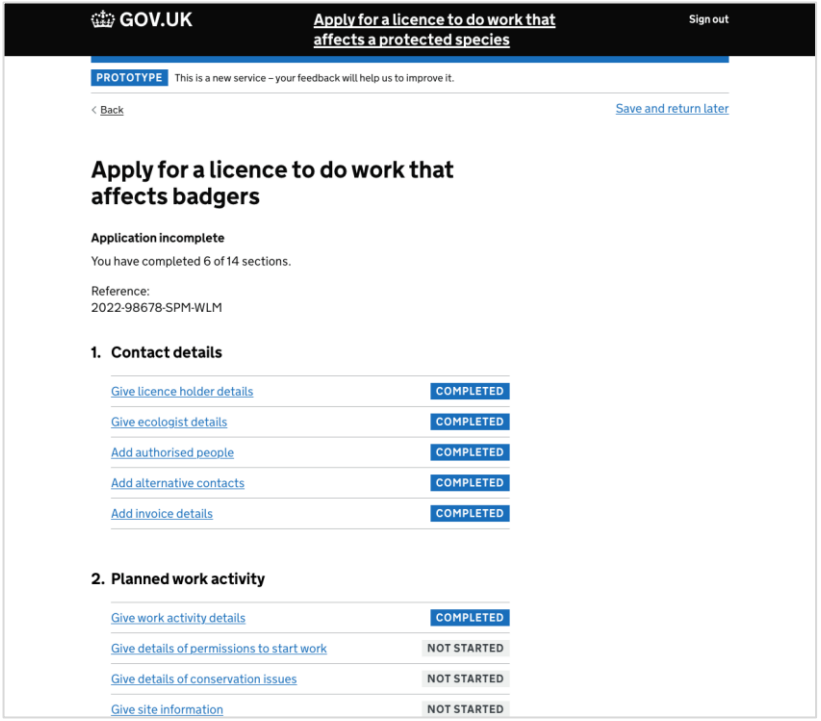
Permission to start work

Scenario: *I'd like you to imagine that you are working for a developer that has plans to develop 200 new homes. Full planning permission has been granted for the first 30 homes. Outline Planning Permission was granted for the roads access, drainage and landscaping.*



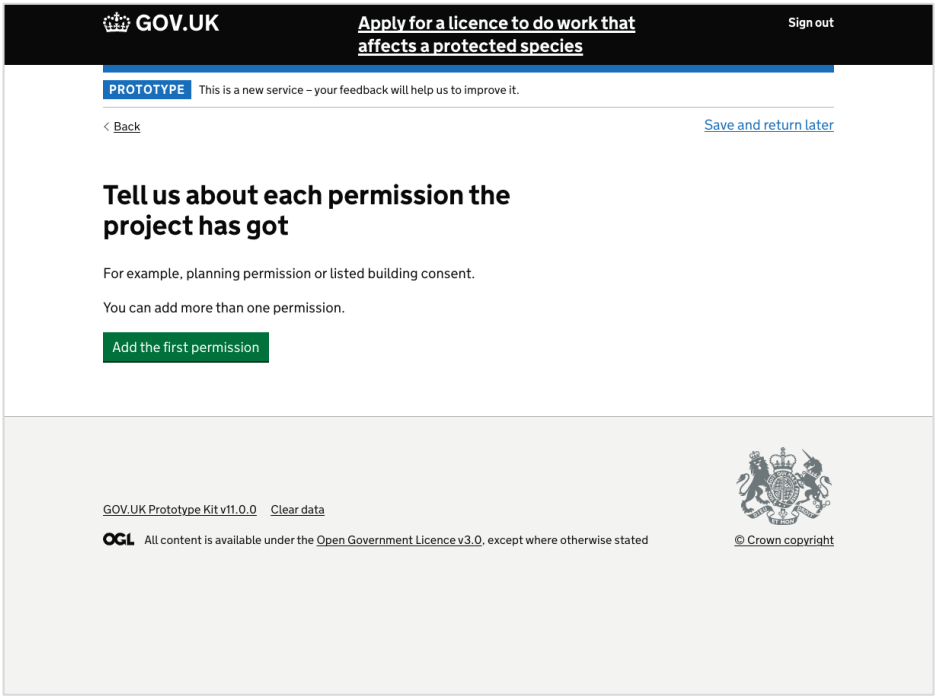
Task List

- The title ‘Give details of permissions to start work’ is ambiguous. It could refer to planning permissions or permissions of the landowner.



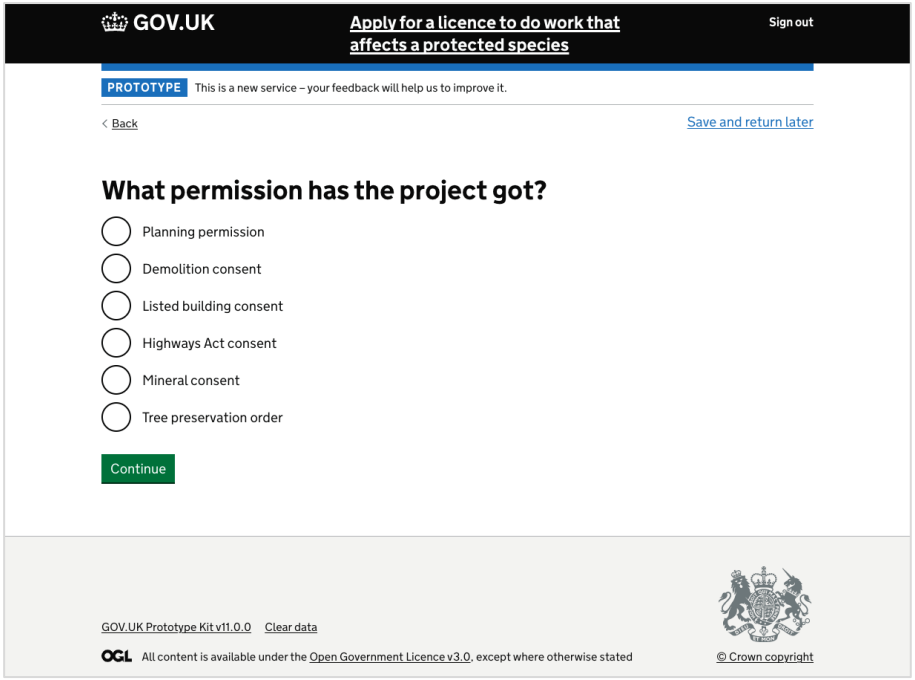
Tell us about each permission

- Page was read but not remembered.



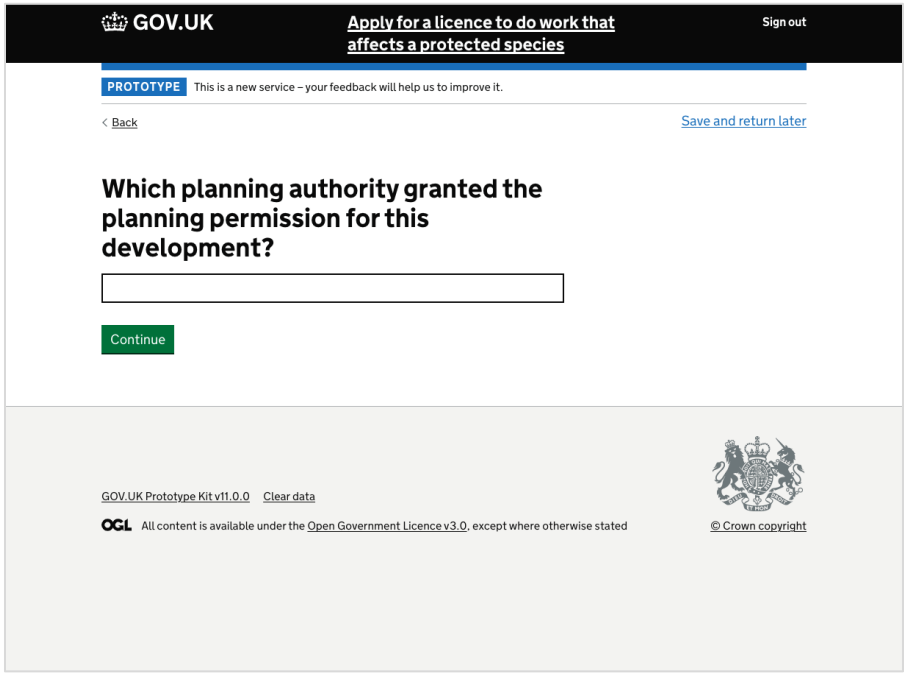
What permission has the project got?

- Generally made sense.
- Permissions mentioned as not on the list include:
  - Harbour empowerment order
  - Local development order
  - Site licence (caravan site licence)



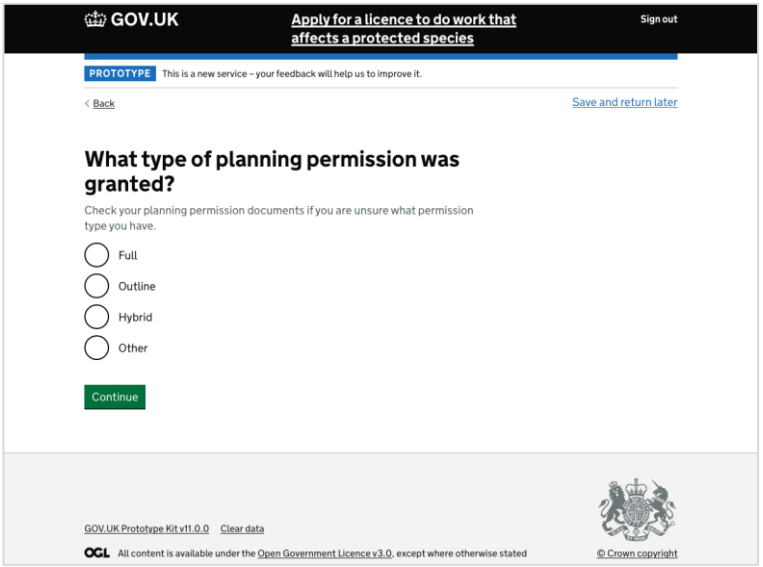
Which planning authority granted planning permission?

- A lack of visibility of remaining questions makes it difficult for users to know what information to enter. Some suggested they would include the permission number and date granted.
    - *"The problem with this is that there's no way to see what will be asked further along"* P4
- Users indicated that the planning permission paperwork is the source of this information.

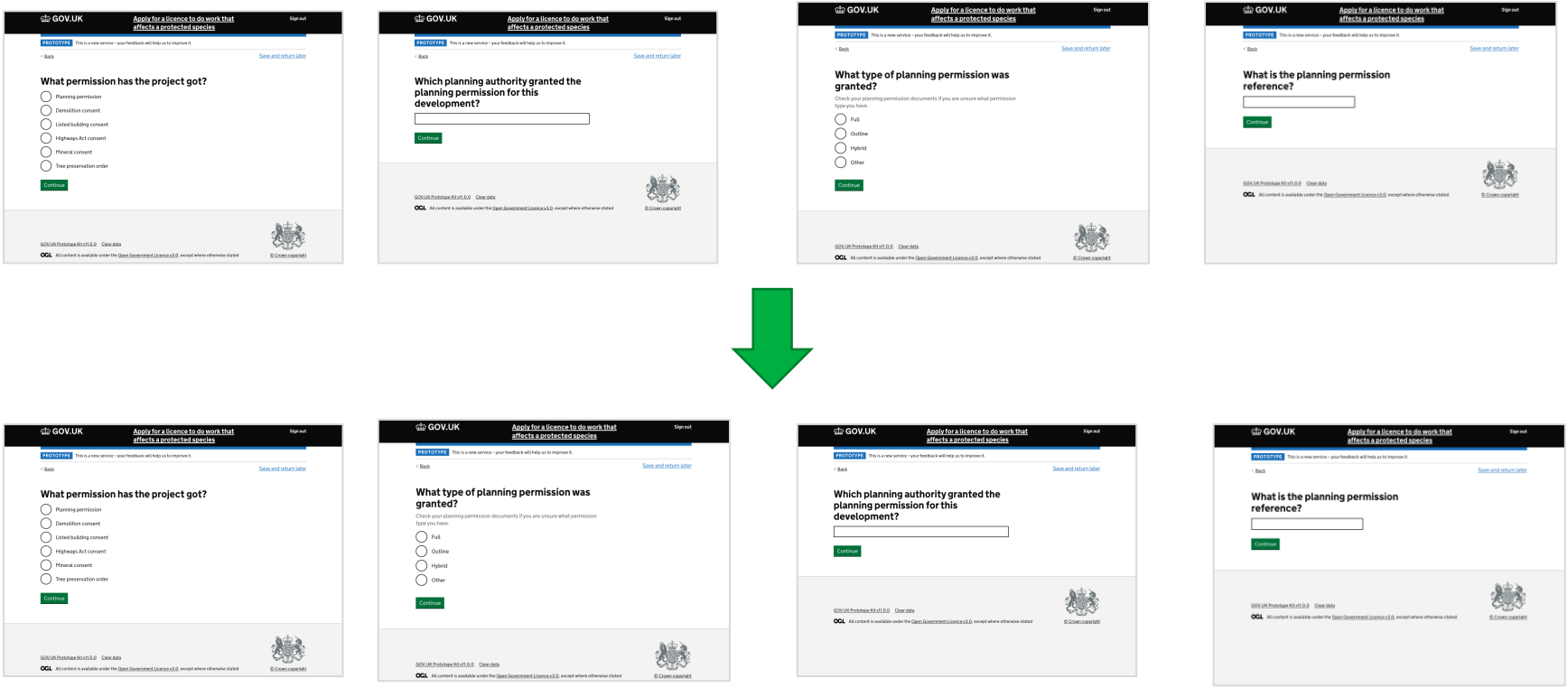


What type of planning permission was granted?

- ‘Hybrid’ was unclear
    - *“What’s Hybrid planning permission?”* P3
- Expectation that more than one permission type can be selected [rather than adding one at a time]
    - *“Might be useful to be able to select more than one thing” P2*
    - *“It doesn’t allow you to select Full and Outline” P3*



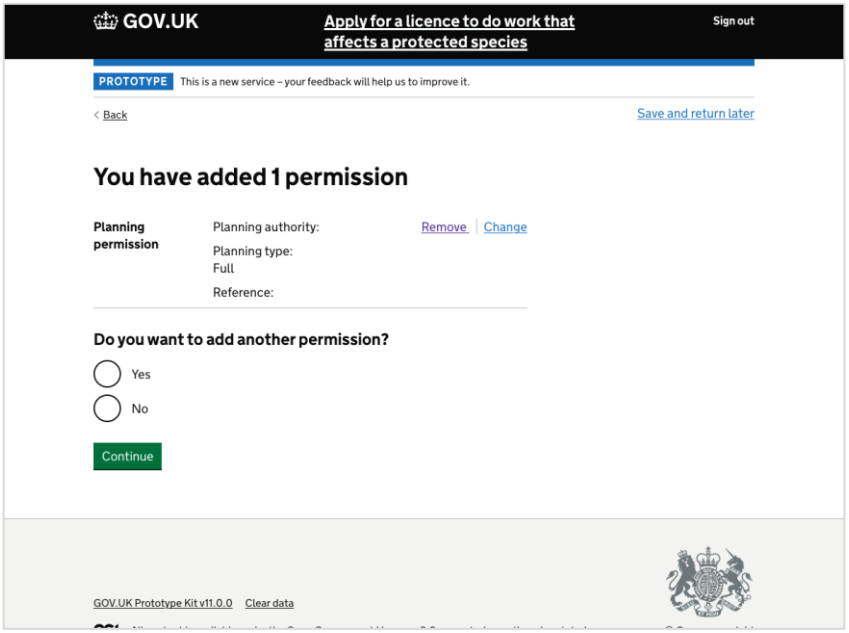
Flow of the planning permission pages



- The sequence in which the questions were presented perceived as disconnected and lacking a logical order.
- Expectation is for planning permission and planning permission type to be shown together.

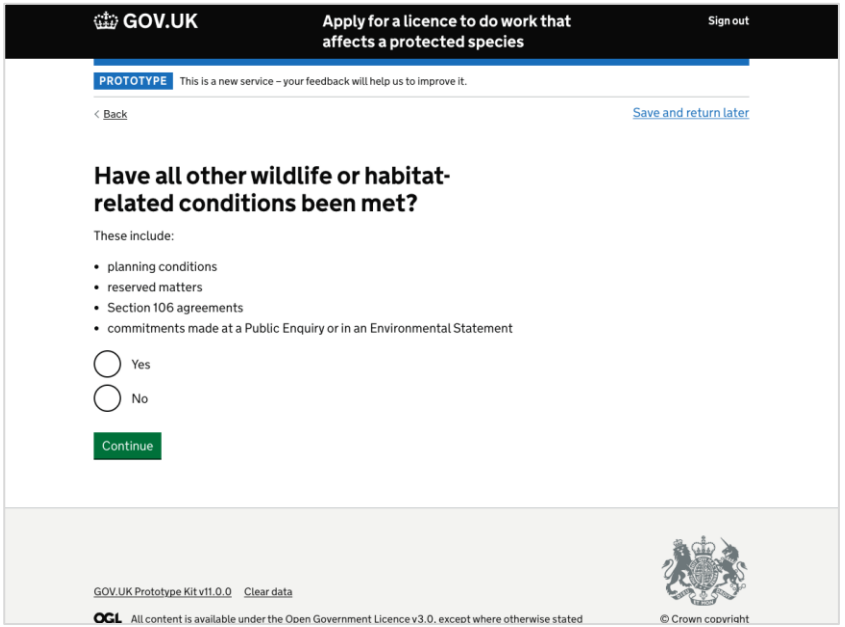
Add another permission

- Add another permission option noticed and understood
- Users knew why multiple permissions would be necessary, as had dealt with these in the past (mineral, planning and outline).
- Some users found entering multiple permissions one at a time to be a 'clunky' experience.
- Users requested the ability to enter more information for each permission
    - *"I want to put a bit of extra stuff in there. Things like the scale, the type of development, the description like x houses. It's very useful to have that information" P4*
    - *"It's sensible to say what the application is for…Full permission for the development of 200 houses. Then the next one would be outline permission for road access and drainage" P2*



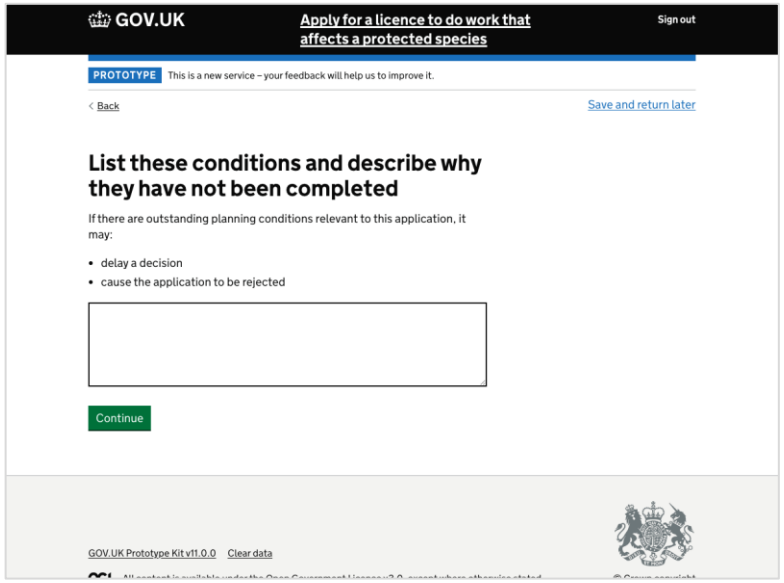
Have all other wildlife or habitat related conditions been met?

- This question perceived as lacking relevance
  - *“I don’t understand how that’s relevant…it’s totally not related to the licence application”* P3
  - *“That’s irrelevant, I would think, from a badger perspective”* P4
- Public Inquiry and Environmental Statement caused confusion and considered as adding additional complexity to the licencing system
  - *“Introducing Public Inquiry and Environmental Statement, into the licencing process …they simply shouldn’t be there” P2*
- Spelling: Inquiry not Enquiry



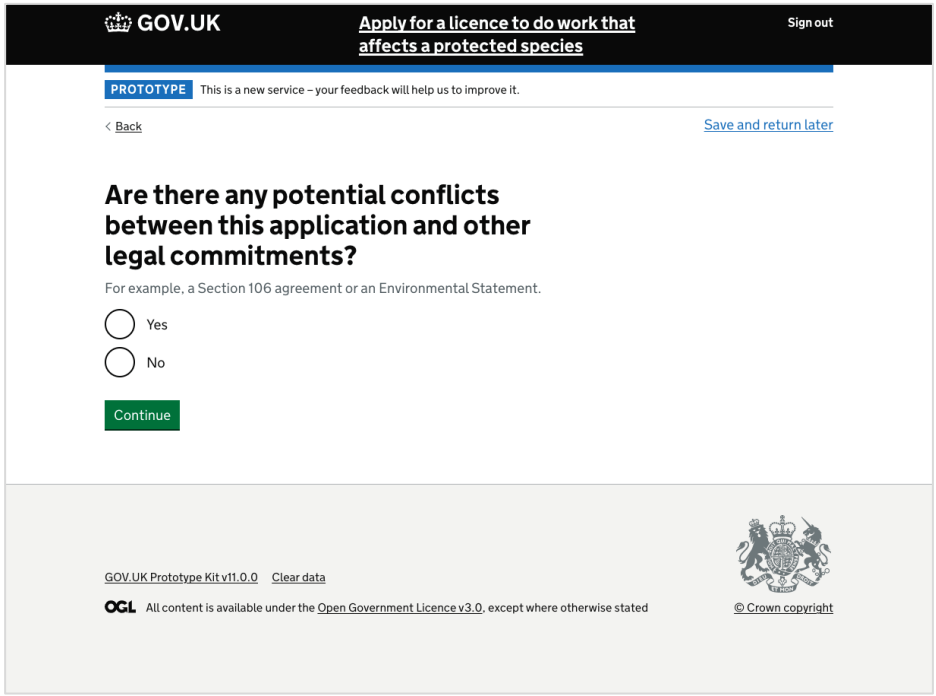
List the conditions and describe why they have not been completed

- This page was found to be off-putting due to the amount of effort required to complete it.
    - *“That’s going to be a pain. I have to get the conditions and put them in. It’s saying describe why they’ve not been completed…I might not know, I’ve got to make calls, setup meetings…yeh, it’s too much”* P3
- Some felt there was a lack of clarity from Natural England on when licences can be submitted if all conditions have not been formally signed off.
    - *“Need to unambiguously state the conditions under which the licence can be applied for” P2*
    - *“This would be full stop, basically not going ahead with it. If you can’t comply, the licence would not be granted” P4*



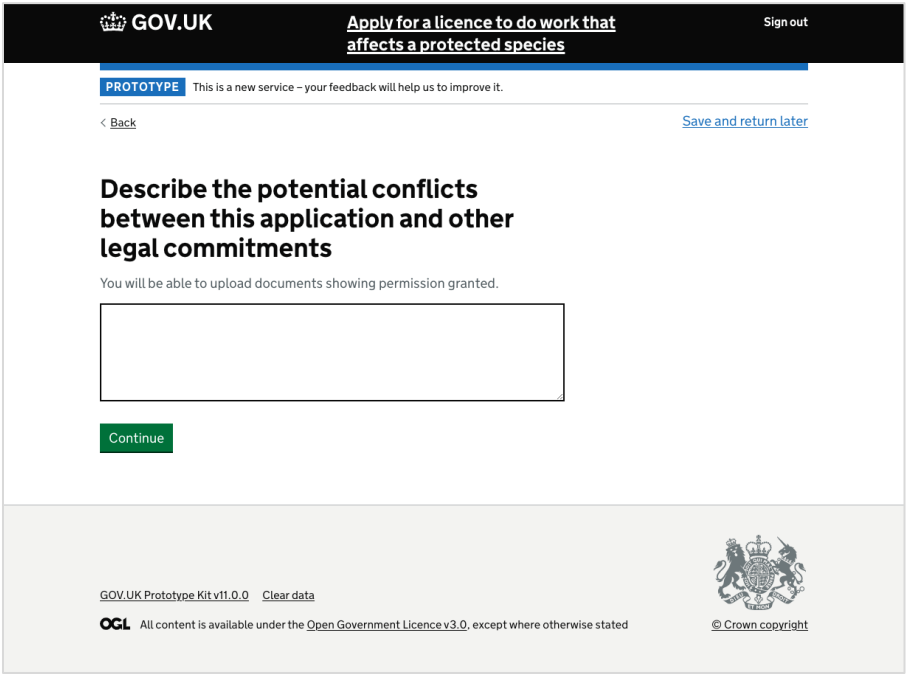
Potential conflicts between application and other legal commitments

- Users weren't expecting to see this question as part of the licence application.
    - *"Doesn't make sense. The planning process should take care of this"* P4
    - *"I'm not sure I understand it because this licence application should be a logical extension of the Environmental Statement and 106 so it shouldn't be something contrary to the consented activity"* P2



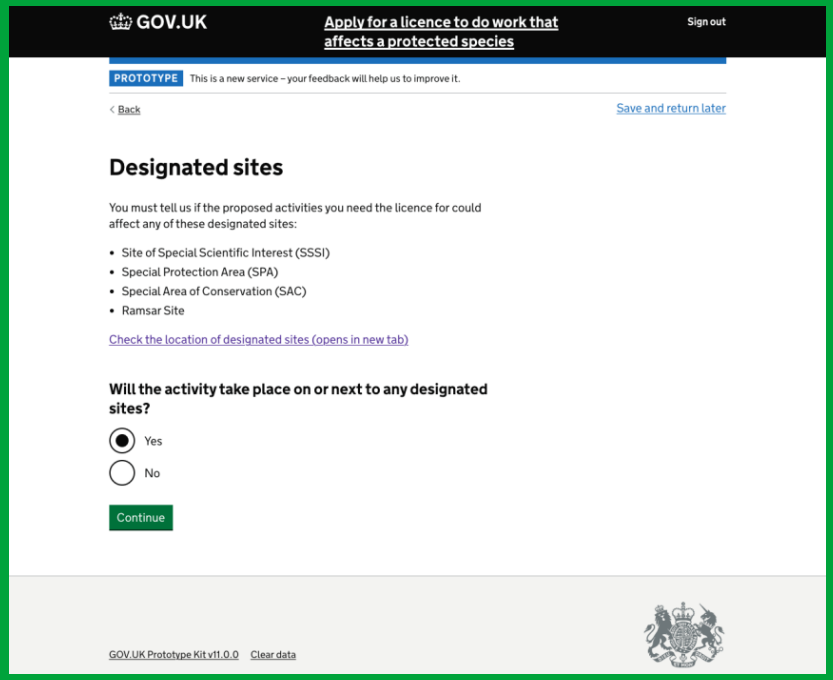
Describe the potential conflicts between this application and other legal commitments

- Users understood this page to be asking about conflicts between the work they were planning and what has been agreed in the Section 106 agreement, Environmental Statement, Public Inquiry.
- However, they questioned why they would be applying for a licence if there were conflicts with any legal commitments.
    - *"it doesn't make sense…if there was a conflict, why would you be doing this?"* P4
- The hint text makes reference to uploading documents that show permission has been granted which does not match what is being asked on this page (potential conflicts)
    - *"I don't understand why that sentence is relevant at all to this question. They look like they should be completely independent of each other"* P3



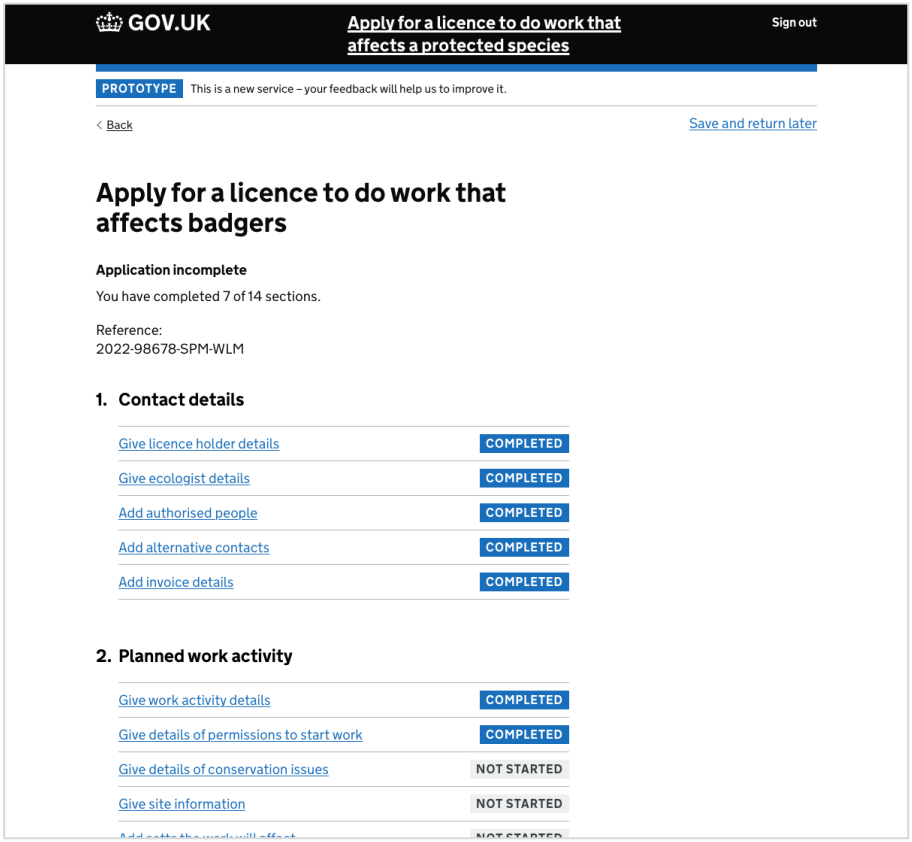
Conservation Considerations

Scenario: *Imagine that you are working for a developer on a development that involves conversion of a former mill to flats. A licence to close a badger sett on the development site is required. The set extends into a neighbouring SSSI woodland known as Tudeley Woods SSSI. The site is also within the Weald AONB. Please use the prototype to show us how you would complete the application for this scenario.*



Task List

- The title *Give details of conservation issues does not* accurately reflect the content required for this section.
- Expectation that ‘Not Started’ would enter form (low digital capability user).



Designated sites

- Users mentioned they would not also consider areas with limited protection such as:
  - Local Nature Reserves
  - National Nature Reserves
  - Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

- Link to check the location noticed and positively received. Most familiar with Magic Map but it was not clear this link would take them there

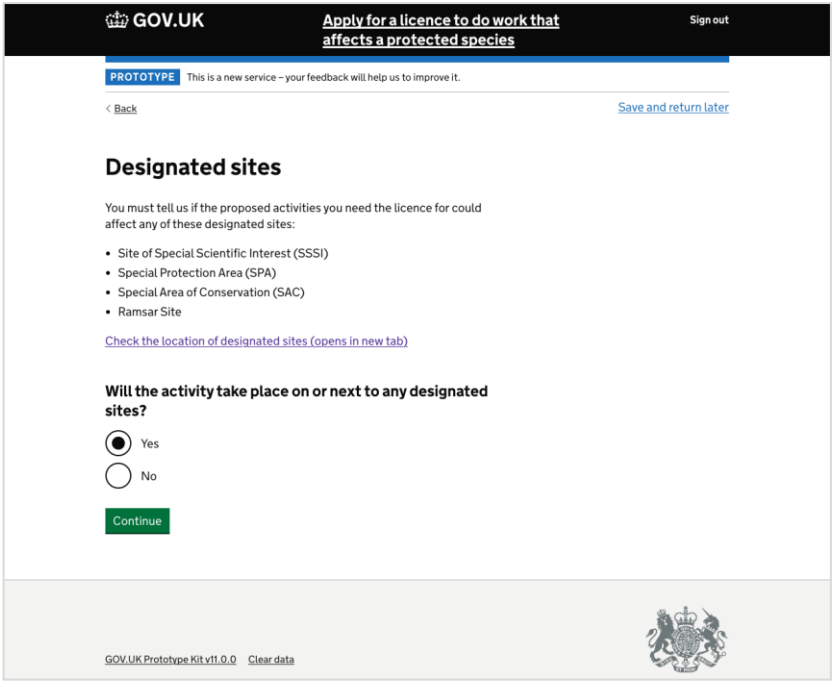
  - *"One of my first points of call would be Magic Map" P5*

  - *"I like there's check the location. That's awesome" P4*

- 'Next to' perceived as ambiguous.
  - *"Does that mean immediately adjacent and connected to it or some distance?"* P5

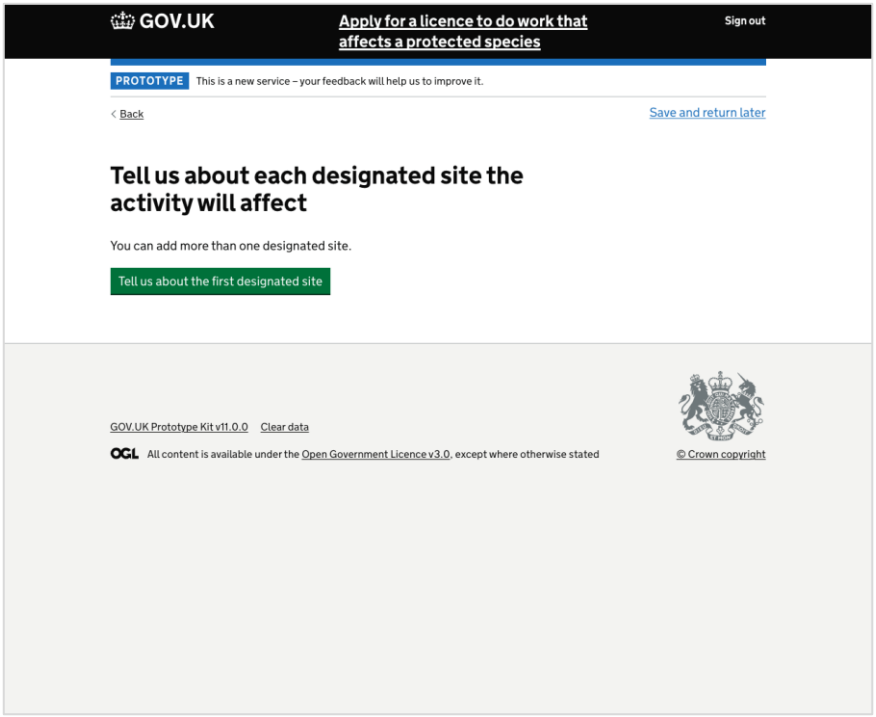
  - *"If you want to be completely unambiguous, the 'next to' could be replaced by 'immediately adjacent'"* P2

  - *"Next to would be in the zone of influence"* P4



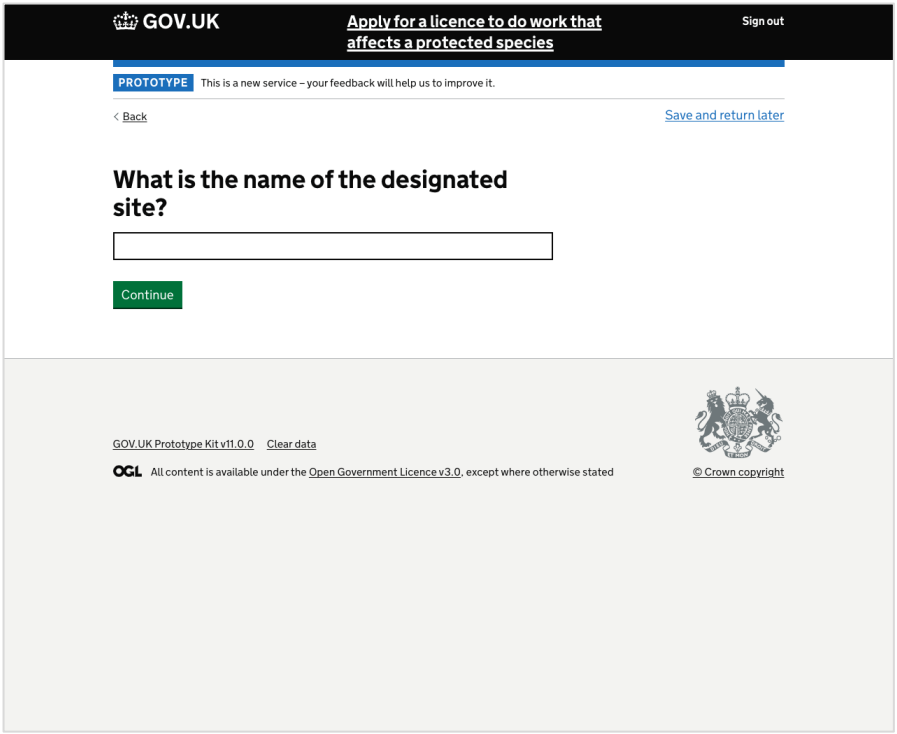
Tell us about each designated site

- Unclear if ‘activity’ is referring to the activity undertaken by the ecologist (closure of a badger sett) or the development activity.
    - *“I would be thinking about the activity that I would be undertaking which would be the closure of the badger sett but it could refer to the wider scheme”* P2



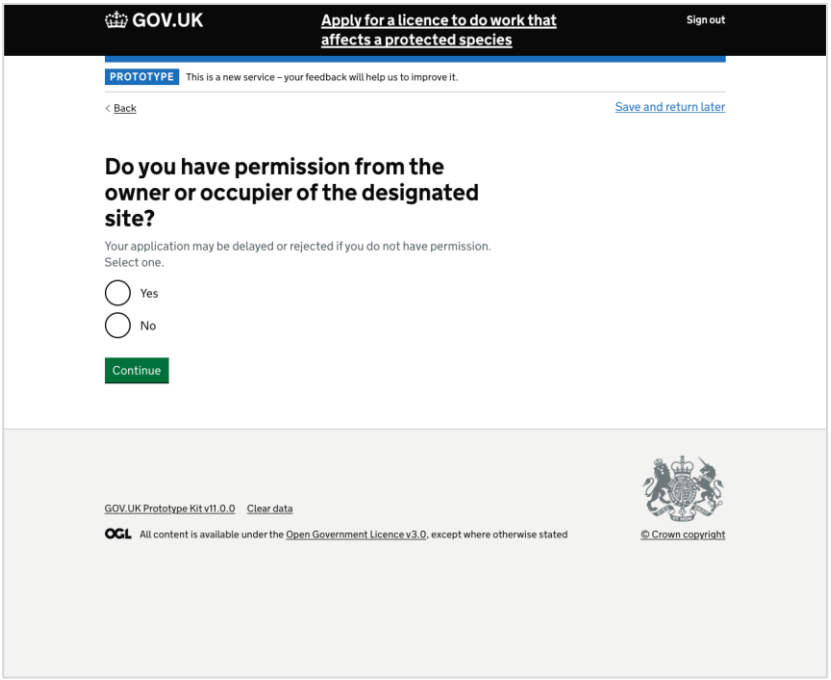
What is the name of the designated site?

- Users expected to enter the site name plus designation e.g. ‘Tudeley Woods SSSI’
- One user (with dyslexia) requested to be able to see the list of designated sites previously entered on this page to avoid accidentally adding the same site twice
    - *“So you can see the ones you have done and the one you are working on. Sometimes there might be 10 sites and they are all named the same. I'm dyslexic and sometimes if you are reading off a list, you might accidentally put the same thing in or muddle it up so it's good to have it there to check so you have a reference” P4*
- There was an expectation to have a free text entry field, in the event they could not find the site in the auto-suggest list.
    - *“ I would expect there to be an ability to enter free text. If there wasn’t, then you’d be stuck in the process at that point, and that’s when you’d be phoning up the Licencing helpline or whoever”* P2

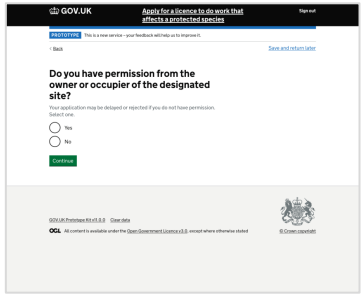


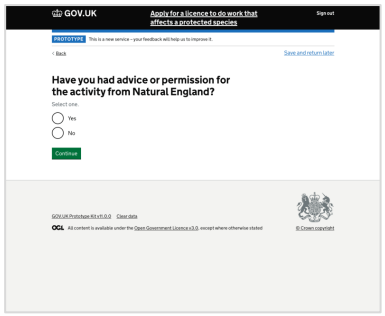
Permission from the owner/occupier of the site

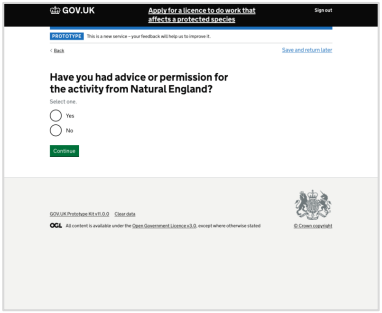
- Confusion on whether this is referring to permission from Natural England or permission from the landowner.
    - *“I would click yes if I had permission to go on the site or from Natural England”* P5

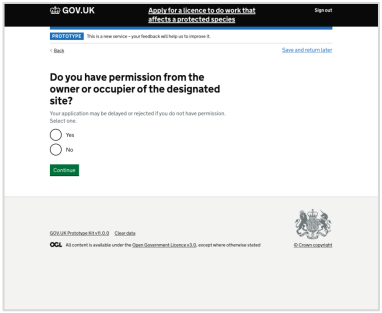


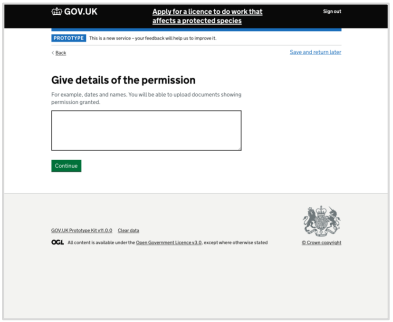
Flow of the landowner and NE permission pages







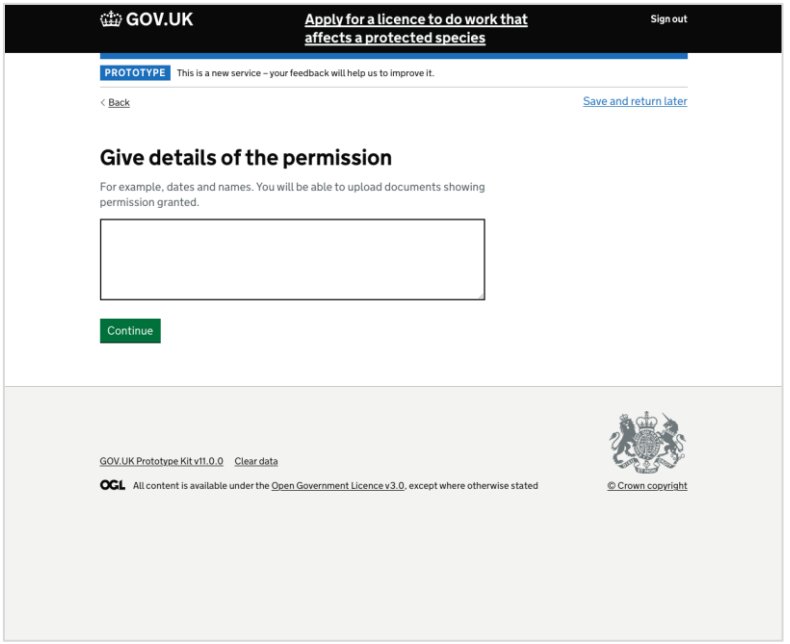




- Users were unsure of what information to provide at certain points in the form because they could not see what questions would be asked later on.

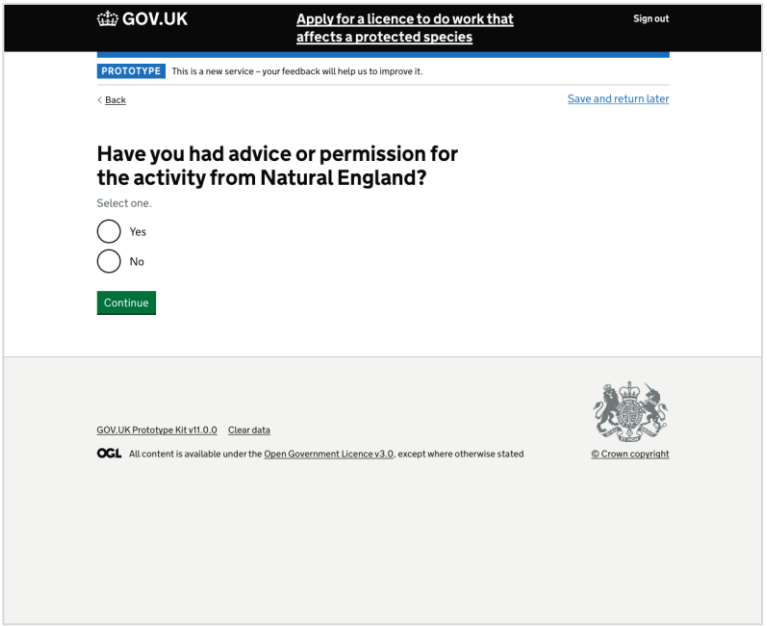
Give details of the permission

- The language used was considered vague
  - *“Give details of the **landowner** permission. To avoid confusion with planning consent which has already been dealt with”* P2



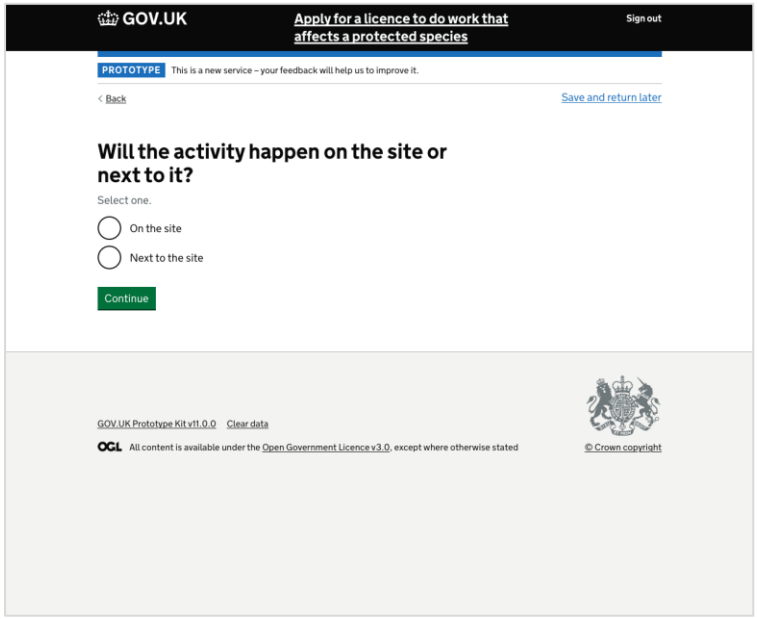
Have you had advice or permission for the activity from Natural England?

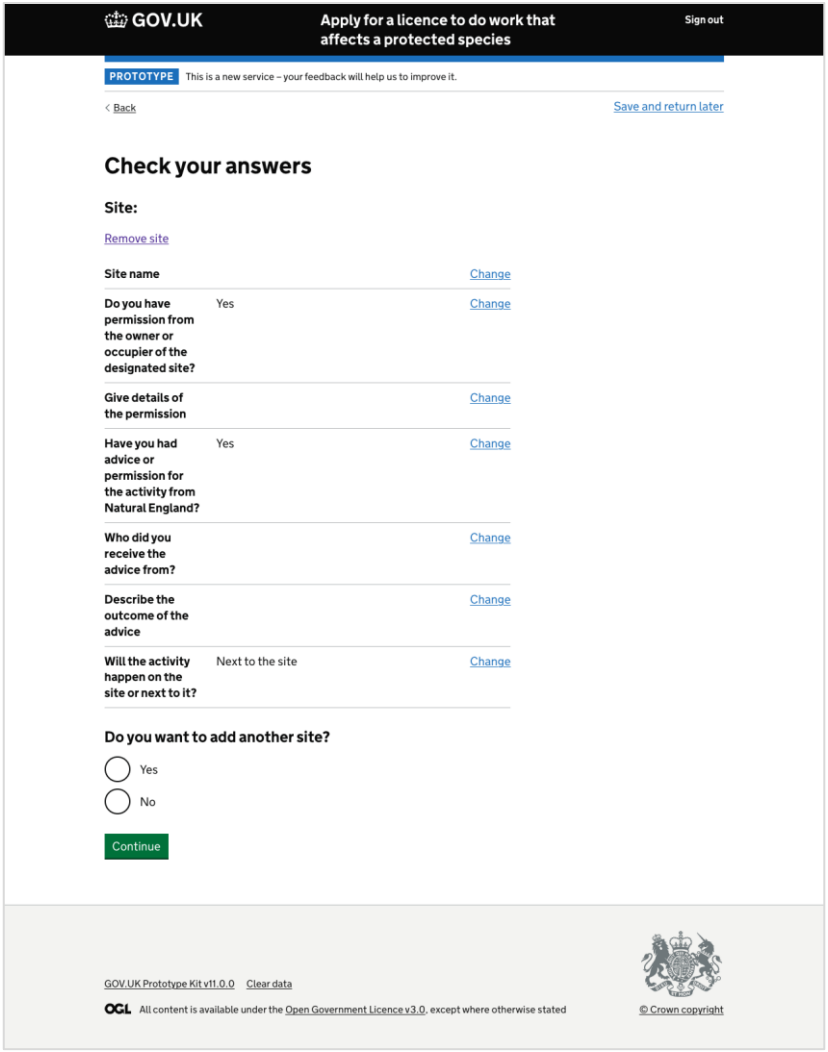
- The language used was considered vague
  - *“Perhaps be specific there and say the Natural England Protected Sites Team””* P2



Will the activity happen on the site or next to the site?

- Vague language confused users on what site was being referred to (development or designated)
  - *“when it says ‘on the site’ you have to assume it means on the protected site. It doesn’t make it clear”* P5



Check your answers

- ‘Add another site’ noticed and understood.