13th November 2026

To ***Anthony Grocott***

ECOLOGICAL UPDATE LETTER: SITE CONDITIONS AND PROPOSED WOODLAND TRACK

THISTLEDOWN COTTAGE, HARBOLETS ROAD, WEST CHILTINGTON, RH20 2LG

1.1 Sylvatica Ecology Ltd carried out a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) of land at Thistledown Cottage, Harbolets Road, West Chiltington, RH20 2LG (NGR: TQ 10013 21022), with the walkover survey undertaken on 22nd April 2024 (Sylvatica Ecology Ltd 2025). This letter confirms that the site conditions recorded in the PEA remain current, and describes the construction of the proposed track through the woodland and its effect on the woodland habitat.

Update on Site Conditions

1.2 Richard Law BSc (Hons) MRes CEnv MCIEEM FLS of Sylvatica Ecology Ltd has visited the site during 2026, including on 6th and 28th May 2026 to carry out an updated bat roost assessment and two bat emergence surveys of the brick agricultural building (Sylvatica Ecology Ltd 2026). During these visits the habitats across the site survey area were observed to be unchanged from those recorded in the PEA. These comprise the oak-dominated lowland deciduous woodland, native species hedgerow, horse-grazed modified grassland, the smaller area of seeded modified grassland, hard standing and bare ground, and the buildings.

1.3 No new habitats, changes in land management or other changes that would alter the assessment of the site for protected species were recorded. The habitat descriptions, the assessment of the potential for protected species and the recommendations set out in the PEA therefore remain valid, and an updated preliminary ecological survey is not considered necessary.

1.4 The 2026 bat surveys updated the status of the brick agricultural building. No bats were observed emerging on either survey and no evidence of current bat use was found, so the roost recorded in 2022 is considered to be no longer in use and a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence is not required. The precautionary method of works for demolition and the bat sensitive lighting measures in the bat survey report remain applicable.

Proposed Track through the Woodland

1.5 The proposals include a track through the woodland to the field. The route of the track avoids any scrub or tree clearance, and no trees or shrubs will be removed. The track will be formed from a geotextile lattice (cellular) framework laid directly on the existing ground surface. No excavation, scraping or levelling will be required, and the ground will not be disturbed.

1.6 The lattice framework spreads the load of vehicles and pedestrians across the ground surface, stabilising the soil and preventing the rutting and compaction that unsurfaced use would otherwise cause. The existing soil structure will therefore not be affected, and water and air will continue to pass through the track to the soil beneath.

1.7 The open cells of the lattice will allow vegetation to grow through the track. Woodland ground flora typical of this woodland, such as bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood sedge *Carex sylvatica* and primrose *Primula vulgaris* recorded in the PEA, will be able to establish through the framework, so that the track remains vegetated and part of the woodland habitat rather than forming a hard surface.

1.8 The measures to protect the woodland set out in the PEA remain applicable during installation of the track. Works should be confined to the line of the track, and these measures should be incorporated into the construction environmental management plan (CEMP) recommended in the PEA.

Conclusion

1.9 The site conditions have not changed since the PEA survey of April 2024, as confirmed during the site visits made in 2026, and the findings and recommendations of the PEA remain valid. The proposed track avoids any scrub or tree clearance, will not disturb the ground or affect the soil structure of the woodland, and will allow woodland ground flora to grow through it.

Signed



Richard Law BSc (Hons) MRes CEnv MCIEEM FLS

Sylvatica Ecology Ltd

Company Registration Number: 07705793

References

Sylvatica Ecology Ltd (2025) Preliminary Ecological Assessment: Land at Thistledown Cottage, Harbolets Road, West Chiltington, RH20 2LG. Version 1.2, 7th October 2025 (survey 22nd April 2024).

Sylvatica Ecology Ltd (2026) Bat Emergence Survey Report: Brick Agricultural Building at Thistledown Cottage, Harbolets Road, West Chiltington, RH20 2LG. 2nd June 2026.