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Report for: Georgina Obbard



**Precautionary Method
Statement
Reptiles & Mobile Protected
Species**
Land at Gorelands Farm,
Pulborough, West Sussex

Precautionary Method Statement – Reptiles and Mobile Protected Species

Prepared for	Georgina Obbard
Planning application	DC/26/0597
Proposal	Demolition of an existing agricultural building and erection of a dwelling, as an alternative to Prior Approval Ref. DC/25/0707
Report Reference	GF040626-PMS
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Document Control

Role	Name / Organisation	Details
Prepared by	Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd	Precautionary Method Statement prepared using the submitted PEA and consultee comments.
Clients	Georgina Obbard	Applicant / Client
Local Planning Authority	Horsham District Council	Condition discharge authority
Ecological Consultee	Place Services, Essex County Council	Ecological advice provided to Horsham District Council

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Precautionary Method Statement

This Precautionary Method Statement (PMS) has been prepared by Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd to support the discharge of the ecological planning condition requiring a PMS for reptiles and mobile protected species for the proposed development at Land at Gorelands Farm, Stane Street, North Heath, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 1DN.

The PMS sets out proportionate precautionary measures and working methods to avoid or minimise harm to reptiles and other mobile protected or Priority species during site clearance, demolition, ground preparation and construction. It should be read alongside the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) prepared by Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd (February 2026) and the ecological advice issued by Place Services on behalf of Horsham District Council (22 May 2026).

The measures in this PMS are proportionate to the ecological baseline, which identified limited suitable habitat within the red line boundary and low residual risk to protected species. The document also repeats the key bat and nesting bird precautionary measures from the PEA where these are relevant to site clearance and demolition.

1.2 Planning context

The planning application is DC/26/0597 for the demolition of an existing agricultural building and the erection of a dwelling as an alternative to Prior Approval Ref. DC/25/0707. Place Services advised that there is no ecological objection subject to conditions, including a prior to commencement PMS for reptiles and mobile protected species.

The relevant ecological condition states that a Precautionary Method Statement for reptiles and mobile protected species shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The PMS is required to contain precautionary mitigation measures and/or works to reduce potential impacts to reptiles and mobile protected species during the construction phase, with the works then carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

This PMS has therefore been written to provide a clear working method for the site team and an auditable mechanism for Horsham District Council to confirm that the development can proceed without unacceptable ecological risk.

1.3 Scope of works covered by this PMS

This PMS applies to all enabling and construction activities that could affect reptiles, amphibians, hedgehogs, nesting birds, badgers, bats or other mobile protected and Priority species. This includes:

- pre-commencement checks and ecological toolbox talks;
- clearance of modified grassland, ruderal margins or any stored materials/refugia;
- demolition, soft-strip or alteration of existing agricultural buildings;
- groundworks, excavation, trenching and movement of soils;
- storage of plant, materials, waste and demolition arisings;
- temporary site lighting, night-working and protection of retained boundary habitats;

- Unexpected discoveries of protected species during works.

2. Ecological Baseline Summary

The baseline below is taken from the PEA prepared by Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd. The survey was undertaken on 2 January 2026 and included a UKHab survey and a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the buildings on site.

2.1 Site habitats

The site comprises a small cluster of agricultural buildings within modified grassland and hard standing, with a shallow agricultural drainage ditch within or adjacent to the boundary. No Priority Habitat was recorded within the application boundary, and no statutory or non-statutory designated ecological sites occur within 1 km of the site.

Habitat/feature	Baseline summary	Relevance to this PMS
Agricultural buildings	Three agricultural structures are present: Building 1, a main brick agricultural barn, building 2, a timber-framed tool store and Building 3, an open-fronted agricultural building.	Potential for limited nesting bird use and a low residual risk of undetected bats in minor crevice features. Demolition/roof works require precautionary checks and soft-strip methods.
Modified grassland	Species-poor, managed grassland forms the majority of the undeveloped red line area.	Low suitability for reptiles and hedgehogs, but precautionary staged clearance is appropriate before groundworks.
Other developed land / hard standing	Concrete hard standing, compacted surfaces and an access yard around the buildings.	Negligible ecological value, but stored materials can create temporary refuges if left in place.
Drainage ditch	A shallow, seasonally influenced agricultural drainage feature with limited aquatic vegetation.	Avoid direct disturbance where practicable and implement pollution prevention measures.
Trees and boundary vegetation	Trees are to be retained. The surrounding landscape includes woodland and boundary vegetation outside the main working footprint.	Retained habitats should be protected from encroachment, lighting spill, storage and unnecessary disturbance.

2.2 Protected and Priority species

The PEA concluded that the site is of low ecological value overall. Records of protected and Priority species occur within the wider 1 km landscape, reflecting the rural setting, but the red line boundary provides limited habitat. The following summary identifies the receptors relevant to this PMS.

Species/group	Baseline conclusion	Requirement under this PMS
Reptiles	Slow-worm and common lizard records were returned within 1 km. On-site habitats are short-managed grassland, buildings and hard standing, with no unmanaged rough grassland, south-facing banks or established refugia. Suitability is low.	No reptile survey, exclusion fencing or translocation is required. Use staged vegetation clearance and stop works if reptiles are encountered.
Hedgehog and small mammals	Hedgehog, a Section 41 Priority species, has been recorded within 1 km. The site has limited shelter habitat, but occasional foraging or refuge use cannot be ruled out.	Check stored materials, vegetation margins and excavations. Provide escape routes and stop works if animals are found at risk.
Amphibians and great crested newt	No ponds or standing water bodies are present within the site boundary. Terrestrial habitat quality is limited, and the site was assessed as negligible for great crested newt.	No GCN survey or license is required based on current evidence. If a GCN or suspected GCN is found, stop works and seek ecological advice immediately.
Nesting birds	Buildings and boundary vegetation may offer limited nesting opportunities for common birds. No active nests were recorded during the January survey, but absence cannot be confirmed during the breeding season.	Avoid vegetation clearance and building works during March-August where possible. If works occur during this period, a competent ecologist must check affected areas before works proceed.
Bats	Buildings are assessed as having negligible to low suitability, and no evidence of roosting bats was recorded. Further, bat surveys were not considered necessary, but precautionary measures are recommended.	A pre-commencement bat check must be undertaken within 24 hours of works affecting roof materials. Roof sheeting and cladding should be removed carefully using a soft-strip approach.
██████	No recent records were returned within 1 km, and no setts or signs were recorded.	Undertake pre-start checks for new evidence. Stop works if a sett or ██████ is discovered.

	The site is of low value for badgers.	
Dormouse	Dormouse records occur within the wider landscape, but the site lacks suitable woodland / connected hedgerow habitat and was assessed as having negligible suitability.	No dormouse survey or license is required. Stop works if a dormouse or a dormouse nest is unexpectedly identified.
Invasive non-native plants	No invasive non-native plant species were recorded within the site boundary.	No specific INNS controls are required. Report any suspect invasive plants to the ECoW before disturbance.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The PMS must be available on site for the duration of enabling and construction works. All relevant site personnel must understand the requirements of this PMS before undertaking works that could affect habitats or protected species.

Role	Responsibility
Client/applicant	Ensure that the approved PMS is issued to the principal contractor and that the planning condition is discharged before works commence.
Principal contractor/site manager	Implement this PMS, programme works to avoid sensitive periods where practicable, arrange required ecological checks, maintain records and stop works if protected species are encountered.
Ecological Clerk of Works / competent ecologist	Provide the pre-commencement ecological briefing/toolbox talk, undertake pre-start checks where required, undertake the bat check within 24 hours of roof works, provide advice on if protected species are found and confirm any further actions.
Site operatives and subcontractors	Follow the approved method statement, remain vigilant for protected species, keep the site tidy, check excavations and report any ecological concerns immediately.

The ECoW does not need to be present full-time for the entire construction phase, provided that the required pre-commencement checks and briefings have been completed and the ECoW remains available to advise if ecological issues arise. ECoW attendance should focus on the initial ecological enabling works, bat roof check, vegetation clearance and any higher risk activities identified during the pre-start review.

3.1 Toolbox talk

Before enabling works commence, a competent ecologist or ECoW shall deliver a toolbox talk to the site manager and operatives involved in clearance, demolition and groundworks. The briefing shall include:

- the habitats and protected species relevant to the site;
- legal protection for bats, nesting birds, reptiles, great crested newt, [REDACTED] and other protected species;
- the working methods in this PMS and the areas where they apply;
- the stop-works procedure and who to contact if an animal, nest, roost or sett is found;
- requirements for excavation checks, material storage and site tidiness;
- the need to keep retained trees, boundary vegetation and the drainage feature protected.

A record of attendance should be kept using the form in Appendix B.

4. Precautionary Working Methods

4.1 Precautionary Ecological Checks

Prior to the commencement of site clearance, demolition or groundworks, the site manager shall arrange the following checks:

Check	Timing	Purpose/action
General ecological pre-start check	Before enabling work to commence, and again if the site remains inactive for more than four weeks before clearance.	Confirm that site conditions remain consistent with the PEA, identify any new refugia, mammal excavations, active nests or ecological constraints, and confirm whether ECoW attendance is required for initial works.
Bat check of buildings	Within 24 hours of works affecting roofing materials, cladding or roof-to-wall junctions.	Check visible crevice features and accessible internal/external areas for bats or signs of bats before roof or cladding removal.
Nesting bird check	Required where vegetation clearance, demolition or building works take place between March and August inclusive.	Confirm whether active nests are present. If an active nest is present, works affecting that nest must be delayed until the nest is no longer active.
Refugia / stored material check	Immediately before moving stored materials, sheet materials, rubble, timber, vegetation piles or other potential refugia.	Avoid killing or injuring reptiles, amphibians, hedgehogs, or other small mammals sheltering beneath materials.

4.2 Site set-up and habitat protection

- The working area shall be clearly defined before clearance begins, and works shall remain within the approved red line/construction footprint.
- Retained trees and boundary vegetation shall be protected from encroachment, storage of materials, soil compaction, fires and unnecessary lighting.
- Existing tree protection measures and Root Protection Areas identified in the arboricultural / planning material shall be respected.
- No materials, waste, fuels or chemicals shall be stored within or immediately adjacent to the drainage ditch or retained boundary habitats.
- The site shall be kept tidy to avoid creating new refugia for reptiles, amphibians, hedgehogs, or rodents.
- Waste materials, offcuts, roof sheets and vegetation arisings shall be removed promptly or stored securely in designated areas.

4.3 Vegetation and grassland clearance

The site has low suitability for reptiles and other mobile species; however, the following precautionary approach shall be adopted for clearance of grassland, ruderal margins or any areas of longer vegetation that develop before construction begins:

- Where practicable, vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season (March-August inclusive).
- Where clearance is required during March-August, a nesting bird check by a competent ecologist shall be completed before clearance of affected vegetation or building features.
- Any dense vegetation, longer grass or vegetation at field margins shall be searched by the ECoW or a competent person immediately before clearance.
- Clearance shall use a staged cut. The first cut shall reduce vegetation to approximately 150 mm, working slowly and directionally towards retained habitat and away from roads, buildings, trenches or active machinery.
- Following the first cut, vegetation should be left for a short period where it is practical to allow any mobile animals to move away, before a second cut reduces vegetation to ground level or the required construction height.
- Arisings shall be removed from the working area promptly and shall not be left in piles overnight unless checked before removal.
- Once cleared, vegetation within the working footprint should be maintained short until construction begins to reduce the risk of animals recolonising the footprint.

4.4 Demolition and building works

Demolition and roof/cladding works shall follow the bat and nesting bird precautions set out below.

- A suitably experienced bat ecologist shall undertake a pre-commencement check within 24 hours of works affecting roofing materials, cladding, roof-to-wall junctions or other crevice features.
- Before any destructive works during March-August inclusive, buildings shall also be checked for active nests where relevant.
- Roof sheeting, cladding and loose external features shall be removed carefully using a soft-strip approach and hand tools where practicable.
- Sheets, boards and panels shall be lifted away carefully rather than pulled or crushed. Mechanical demolition of roof or cladding sections shall not commence until the soft strip of relevant features has been completed or checked.
- Works shall be undertaken in daylight where practicable. If bats, an active nest, or evidence of either is found, works shall stop and the ECoW shall be contacted immediately.
- Any active bird nest shall be retained undisturbed with an appropriate buffer until the young have fledged and the nest is confirmed inactive by a competent person.

4.5 Groundworks, excavations and materials storage

- Initial soil stripping and ground disturbance shall proceed slowly and directionally, allowing mobile species to move into retained habitat.
- Open excavations shall be avoided overnight where practicable. Where excavations must remain open, they shall include a ramp, battered side or timber plank to allow animals to escape.
- Excavations, trenches and pits shall be inspected each morning before work resumes, and again before backfilling.
- Open pipes shall be capped or covered overnight to prevent animals from becoming trapped.
- Stored materials shall be placed on pallets or raised bearers where practicable to reduce refuge potential.
- Materials that have been stored on the ground for more than 24 hours shall be lifted carefully and checked before being moved.
- No rubble, timber, vegetation, geotextile, plastic sheeting or roof materials shall be left in unmanaged piles within the working area unless checked before movement.

4.6 Drainage ditch and pollution prevention

- The drainage ditch shall be retained and avoided unless separate consented works are required otherwise.
- A practical buffer shall be maintained from the drainage feature during storage of materials, refuelling, concrete works and chemical use.
- Plant shall be checked for leaks before use, and spill kits shall be available on site.
- Concrete washout, cement, silt-laden water, fuels, oils and chemicals shall not be allowed to enter the ditch or adjoining habitats.
- If amphibians or other animals are encountered in or near the ditch during works, the stop-works procedure shall be followed.

4.7 Lighting, night-working and retained habits

The site lies within a rural landscape where dark corridors and boundary vegetation may be used by bats and other nocturnal fauna. The following measures shall apply to temporary and permanent lighting relevant to construction:

- Night-working shall be avoided where practicable.
- Temporary lighting shall be the minimum necessary for safe working and shall be directed away from retained trees, boundary vegetation, the drainage ditch and adjacent woodland/field margins.
- Lighting shall be cowled, hooded or directional where required to avoid spill onto retained habitats.
- External lighting should use warm white lamps at 2700K or lower where practicable and avoid ultraviolet or blue-rich light sources.
- Security lighting, where required, should be motion-controlled and set to the shortest practicable timer.

5 Species-Specific Measures

5.1 Reptiles

The site is of low suitability for reptiles, and no further reptile survey, reptile fencing or translocation is considered necessary. Precautionary staged vegetation clearance and checks of potential refugia are sufficient given the habitat present. If a reptile is encountered during works, works in the immediate area shall stop. The animal should be allowed to move away of its own accord where safe to do so. If the animal is at immediate risk, the ECoW shall advise on safe movement to a retained suitable habitat outside the working footprint.

5.2 Hedgehog and small mammals

Hedgehogs may occur occasionally in the wider landscape. Vegetation piles, stored materials and excavations shall be checked before disturbance. If a hedgehog is found in the open and is not at immediate risk, it shall be allowed to move away naturally. If a hedgehog is discovered in a nest or hibernaculum, works in that area shall stop and the ECoW shall be contacted for advice. Excavations shall be provided with escape ramps or covered overnight where practicable.

5.3 Amphibians and great crested newt

The PEA assessed the site as negligible suitability for great crested newt, and no ponds or standing water bodies are present within the site boundary. Nonetheless, amphibians may occasionally move through rural sites, particularly during damp conditions. If common amphibians are encountered, works shall pause while they move to safety. If a great crested newt or suspected great crested newt is found, works shall stop immediately in the affected area, and a competent ecologist shall be contacted. Works shall not recommence in that area until ecological advice has been received, and any legal requirements have been resolved.

5.4 [REDACTED]

No [REDACTED] setts or signs were recorded during the PEA, and the site is considered low value for [REDACTED]. Before groundworks, the working area and any adjacent banks or vegetated margins shall be checked for new excavations or signs. If a sett or potential sett is identified, works shall stop within the immediate area, and the ECoW shall define an exclusion zone and advise on any further survey, timing constraint or license requirement.

5.5 Nesting birds

All wild birds, their active nests and eggs are protected. Vegetation clearance and demolition affecting potential nesting features should be undertaken outside March-August, where practicable. Where works are required during March-August inclusive, a competent ecologist shall check affected vegetation and buildings before works begin. If an active nest is found, works that could damage or disturb the nest shall stop, and a suitable buffer shall be maintained until the nest is confirmed inactive.

5.6 Bats

All bats and bat roosts are legally protected. The PEA and PRA concluded that the buildings are of negligible to low bat roost suitability and no evidence of bats was recorded. No further bat emergence surveys are required. As a precaution, a suitably experienced bat ecologist shall complete a check within 24 hours of works affecting roof materials, cladding or roof-to-wall junctions. Roof sheeting and cladding shall then be removed carefully using soft-strip methods. If a bat or evidence of a bat roost is found, works shall stop immediately, and a licensed bat ecologist shall be contacted. Works may only recommence once the ecologist confirms it is lawful and safe to do so.

5.7 Dormouse

Dormouse is not considered a constraint because the site lacks suitable woodland or connected hedgerow habitat within the working footprint. If a dormouse, suspected dormouse or dormouse nest is unexpectedly discovered, works shall stop immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist shall be contacted for advice before works recommence.

6. Stop-Works Procedure

The following stop-works procedure shall be followed if any protected species, active bird nest, bat, suspected bat roost, reptile, great crested newt, [REDACTED] sett, dormouse nest or other unexpected ecological constraint is identified.

- Stop works immediately in the affected area. Do not continue works that could injure, kill, trap, disturb or destroy the place of shelter of the animal.
- Make the area safe. Turn off machinery where safe, avoid further disturbance and establish a temporary exclusion zone appropriate to the species and risk.
- Do not handle the animal unless it is in immediate danger and only where it is safe and lawful to do so. For bats, great crested newt, dormouse or [REDACTED] sett issues, do not attempt to move or disturb the animal/feature without ecological advice.
- Contact the ECoW / competent ecologist immediately and provide a photograph if this can be taken without causing disturbance.
- Record the date, time, location, species or description, persons present and action taken using the form in Appendix C.
- Works may recommence only when the ECoW confirms that it is lawful and appropriate to do so, and any additional mitigation, buffer, timing restriction or license requirement has been implemented.

7. Implementation Sequence and Compliance Checklist

Stage	Action	Responsible party	Record required
Within 24 hours of roof works	Bat pre-commencement check of buildings/roof materials/cladding.	Suitably experienced bat ecologist	Bat check record/email confirmation.
Before works March-August	Nesting bird check of affected vegetation and building features.	Competent ecologist	Toolbox talk attendance record and pre-start check note.
Within 24 hours of roof works	Bat pre-commencement check of buildings/roof materials/cladding.	Suitably experienced bat ecologist	Bat check record/email confirmation.

Site set-up	Demarcate working area; protect retained trees, boundary vegetation and ditch; set up material storage areas.	Principal contractor	Site inspection checklist/photographs.
Clearance	Staged vegetation clearance and careful removal of potential refugia.	Contractor, with ECoW where required	Clearance record and any species finds.
Demolition	Soft-strip roof sheeting, cladding and potential crevice features using careful methods.	Contractor, following bat check	Demolition sequence record.
Groundworks	Check excavations daily, provide escape ramps/covers and cap pipes overnight.	Site manager/operatives	Daily site checks.
Unexpected find	Implement stop-works procedure and obtain ecological advice.	All site personnel	Protected species / unexpected finds record.
Completion of ecological enabling works	ECoW to confirm whether PMS measures have been implemented and whether any further action is needed.	ECoW / client	Completion note if requested by LPA.

8. Record keeping and reporting

The following records shall be retained by the site manager and made available to the LPA if requested:

- copy of the approved PMS and any subsequent ecological advice notes;
- toolbox talk attendance record;
- pre-start ecological check record;
- bat pre-commencement record completed within 24 hours of roof works;
- nesting bird check records, if works occur during March-August inclusive;
- daily excavation check records during groundworks;

- protected species / unexpected finds records, including photographs and actions taken;
- ECoW completion note or email confirmation if required by the LPA.

9. Conclusion

The proposed development site comprises agricultural buildings, managed modified grassland, hard standing and a shallow drainage feature. The PEA concluded that the site is of low ecological value overall, with low or negligible suitability for reptiles, great crested newt, dormouse and [REDACTED] and negligible to low suitability for bats in the buildings. Records of protected and Priority species within the wider landscape justify a precautionary approach during site clearance and construction.

Implementation of the measures in this PMS will minimise the risk of harm to reptiles and other mobile protected and Priority species and provide a clear method for compliance with the ecological planning condition for DC/26/0597. No further protected species surveys or licenses are required on the basis of the available baseline, unless protected species or other ecological constraints are discovered during works.

10. References

British Trust for Ornithology (2021). Birds of Conservation Concern 5. BTO, Thetford.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition, amended 2024). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

CIEEM (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd edition). Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

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Froglife (2021). Reptile Survey Guidelines. Froglife, Peterborough.

JNCC (2023). UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework: Lists of Priority Species and Habitats. Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Leith Ecology Consulting Ltd (2026). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Land at Gorelands Farm, Pulborough, West Sussex. Reference GF140226, Version R.01.

Natural England (2024). Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities.

Place Services, Essex County Council (2026). Ecological advice to Horsham District Council for application DC/26/0597, Gorelands Farm, dated 22 May 2026.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended).

Appendix A – Site Plan and Habitat Map

The submitted PEA includes the site block plan and UKHab / BNG habitat map. These are reproduced below for ease of reference. The approved planning drawings should be treated as the definitive source for construction layout and red line boundary.



Figure A1. Proposed development outline design / site block plan.



Figure A2. UKHab / BNG habitat map from the PEA.

Appendix B – Toolbox Talk Attendance Record

This form should be completed before site clearance, demolition or groundworks commence.

Project	Land at Gorelands Farm, Stane Street, North Heath, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 1DN
Date of Briefing	
Briefing delivered by	
Role / Organisation	
Site Manager	
Topics covered	Protected species; site constraints; PMS working methods; stop-works procedure; excavation checks; material storage; lighting and retained habitats.
Documents issued	Approved PMS and any ecological check records.

Name	Company	Role	Signature	Date

Appendix C – Protected Species / Unexpected Finds record

This form should be completed if any protected species, active nest, bat, suspected roost, reptile, great crested newt, [REDACTED] sett, dormouse nest or other ecological constraint is found during works.

Date and time of find	
Location on site	
Species/feature found	
Description/evidence	
Photograph taken? If yes, file reference	
Works stopped? Area made safe	
Ecologist / ECoW contacted	
Advice received	
Action taken/exclusion zone	
Date works recommended	
Authorised by	