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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at Gorelands Farm,
Pulborough, West Sussex

Executive Summary

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) supports a planning application for the proposed development at Land at Gorelands Farm, Stane Street, North Heath, Pulborough, West Sussex.

The assessment comprised a desk study (1 km radius, 2015-2026 records) and a site walkover undertaken on 2 January 2026, including a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (2023) and CIEEM (2017) guidance.

The site contains three agricultural buildings within modified grassland and hardstanding, with a minor drainage feature. No Priority Habitat occurs within the boundary and no statutory or non-statutory designated sites lie within 1 km.

Protected species records exist within the wider landscape; however, the site provides limited suitable habitat. The buildings were assessed as having negligible to low suitability for roosting bats, with no evidence of occupation recorded. Further bat surveys are not required. The site offers limited nesting potential for common birds; works should avoid the nesting season or be preceded by checks. The site is of negligible or low suitability for great crested newt, dormouse and reptiles. No invasive non-native plant species were identified.

Ecological constraints are limited and can be addressed through proportionate measures including a pre-commencement bat check, soft-strip demolition and appropriate timing of vegetation clearance.

The development also presents opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, including integrated bat and bird features, native planting and sensitive lighting design.

The proposal qualifies for exemption from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement as a self-build development; however, biodiversity enhancements are proposed as part of the scheme.

Overall, the site is of low ecological value and, subject to the precautionary measures outlined, the proposed development is unlikely to result in significant adverse ecological effects. No further ecological surveys are required to support determination of the application.

Contents

Introduction	4
Background and Purpose	4
Site description	4
Proposed development.....	5
Relevant Planning Policies and Legislation.....	6
Biodiversity Net Gain	7
Methodology	8
Desk Study	8
Data Sources and Search Areas	8
Field Survey.....	9
Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	9
Quality Assurance.....	10
Limitations.....	10
Data validity	10
Results.....	11
Desk Study Results	11
Designated Sites.....	11
Priority Habitats and Species Records	11
Field Survey Results.....	13
Habitats.....	13
Protected and Priority Species	15
Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	17
Ecological Constraints and Opportunities	18
Constraints.....	18
Opportunities	19
Mitigation Hierarchy.....	19
Further Survey Recommendations.....	21
References	22
Appendix 1 – Habitat Map - UKHab/BNG	23
Appendix 2 - Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment.....	24

Introduction

Background and Purpose

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been prepared on behalf of Georgina Obbard, to inform proposed development at Land at Gorelands Farm, Pulborough. The report supports the planning process by identifying the ecological value of the site and establishing a biodiversity baseline in accordance with current UK legislation and Horsham District Council requirements.

The aims of this report are to:

Undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA):

- Complete an Extended UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) survey to identify and map all habitat types present on site.
- Assess the potential for the site to support protected and notable species, using both field survey and desk-based review of local biological records.
- Carry out a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) of buildings and structures on site to evaluate their suitability for roosting bats.

Inform Planning and Design:

- Provide recommendations for further surveys, mitigation, and opportunities for ecological enhancement.
- Present clear, robust baseline data to support planning applications and future ecological management of the site.

This report incorporates the results of the field survey, desk study, Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the wooden structures on site and habitat mapping. It is intended for use by the client, design team, and planning authority to guide the development process and support a successful planning application.

This PEA has been undertaken in accordance with CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd edition, 2017).

Site description

The application site is located at Gorelands Farm, Stane Street, North Heath, Pulborough, West Sussex (RH20 1DN). The site lies within a rural agricultural landscape characterised by dispersed farmsteads, pasture fields, small-scale woodland blocks and hedgerow-defined field boundaries. The surrounding landscape is typical of the Low Weald, comprising mixed agricultural land interspersed with mature hedgerows and occasional tree lines.

The site is accessed via an existing farm track extending from Stane Street, which provides access to the wider Gorelands Farm complex and associated agricultural land. The track crosses a railway bridge and continues into the farmstead. The application buildings form a discrete cluster set slightly separate from the principal farmhouse and other agricultural structures.

The site is not located within a statutory ecological designation and does not fall within a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) or other non-statutory designation, based on the desk study data reviewed. The wider 1 km landscape includes areas of ancient woodland and deciduous woodland priority habitat; however, these habitats do not extend into or directly adjoin the application boundary.

The site lies within open countryside under the Horsham planning framework and is surrounded predominantly by agricultural land managed for grazing and associated rural uses.

The approximate red line boundary of the site and the immediate surrounding area are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Approximate location of the red line boundary and immediate surroundings, based on Google Earth Pro imagery dated 14 June 2025 (image captured February 2026).

Proposed development

The current application seeks full planning permission for the construction of a single new-build residential dwelling at Land at Gorelands Farm.

The proposal comprises a timber frame dwelling with a clay tiled pitched roof. The building is designed to sit within the existing developed footprint of the site and replaces previously developed land associated with agricultural use and a former caravan location.

The layout has been amended from earlier proposals to respond to arboricultural constraints identified on site. In particular, the position of the dwelling has been marginally adjusted to avoid encroachment into identified Root Protection Areas (RPAs), notably that of T3 Oak (See Figure 2), and to ensure that the development does not adversely affect retained trees. The revised footprint now sits outside the primary RPA constraints as shown on the accompanying site block plan.

Access arrangements remain via the existing access point. The development footprint is contained within the red line boundary and does not extend into adjoining woodland or areas of higher ecological sensitivity.

The proposal does not require removal of mature trees and avoids disturbance to key arboricultural features. The adjustment in siting reduces potential impacts on tree roots and associated ecological value.

External works will comprise typical residential curtilage landscaping, including garden areas and driveway surfacing. No encroachment into adjacent woodland or off-site habitats is proposed.

Figure 2 shows the redline boundary and proposed outline design for the proposed development which is still subject to change.

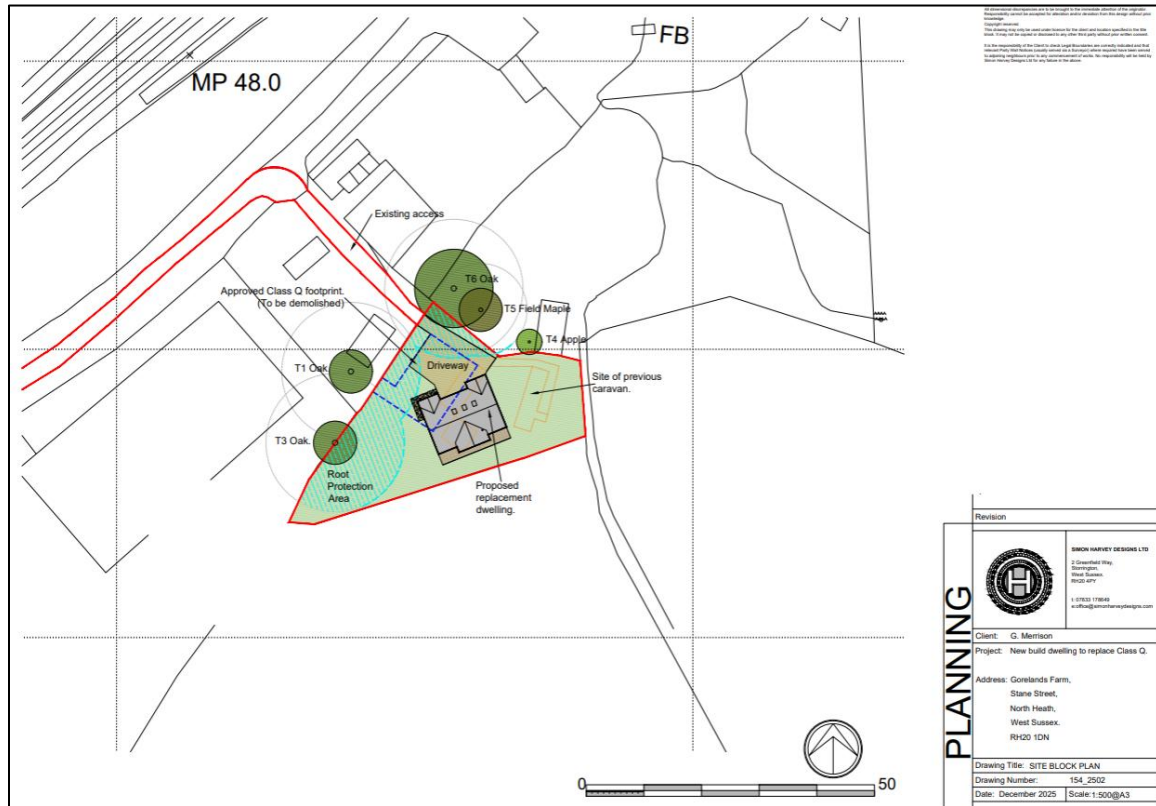


Figure 2 Proposed Development outline design.

Relevant Planning Policies and Legislation

The site was surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure the proposals were compliant with relevant planning policy and legislation. Policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) as well as the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015). These policies included the following which are considered relevant to ecology, biodiversity, and nature conservation:

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

- Policy 24: Environmental Protection - Ensures that development does not have an unacceptable impact on the environment.
- Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character - Requires the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and landscape character.
- Policy 26: Strategic Countryside Protection - Protects the countryside from inappropriate development.
- Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity - Promotes the retention, protection, and enhancement of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- Policy 37: Sustainable Construction - Encourages sustainable design and construction methods that support environmental objectives.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) provides protection for wild birds, certain protected species and designated sites in Great Britain. All wild birds are protected from intentional killing, injury or disturbance, and from damage or destruction of active nests.

The proposed development will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Act, including appropriate timing of works and implementation of precautionary measures where necessary.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) provide protection for European Protected Species (EPS), including all bat species, and support the protection of designated European sites.

Where development has the potential to affect EPS, appropriate assessment, mitigation and licensing (where required) must be undertaken in accordance with these Regulations. The proposed development will comply with the Regulations and relevant Natural England guidance.

Biodiversity Net Gain

In accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021), most planning permissions granted in England from January 2024 are subject to a mandatory requirement to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

The proposed development comprises the development one residential dwelling as a self-build development. The application relates to a single dwelling on a site significantly below 0.5 hectares.

The development therefore falls within the exemption criteria for self-build and custom housebuilding as set out in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. Confirmation of self-build status will be provided within the planning submission documentation where required.

As such, the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement does not apply to this proposal.

Notwithstanding this exemption, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement have been identified and are outlined within this report.

Methodology

Desk Study

A desk study was undertaken, January 2026, to provide a robust overview of the ecological context of the site and its surroundings, and to inform the scope of the field survey and assessment. The desk study aimed to identify:

- Statutory and non-statutory designated sites within the zone of influence,
- Records of protected and notable species,
- Priority habitats and ecological networks relevant to the site.

Data Sources and Search Areas

Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC)

Ecological data were obtained from SxBRC, the principal environmental record centre for East and West Sussex, including the Horsham district. SxBRC collates data from local recorders, ecological consultants, and the public, ensuring a robust and up-to-date biodiversity dataset.

The data request included:

- Protected and notable species records within a 1km radius of the site boundary
- Bat records within a 1km radius
- Bird records within a 1km radius
- Invasive species records within a 1km radius
- Statutory designated sites within a 2km radius
- Non-statutory designated sites and Section 41 (Priority Habitats) or other notable habitats, within a 1km radius of the site.

Desk study data on protected and notable species was limited to records from the last ten years to ensure relevance and accuracy for the current assessment. Other data sources included:

- **MAGIC Map (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)** National datasets on statutory sites, habitats, and environmental constraints were reviewed to supplement local records and provide context on landscape-scale ecological features.
- **Aerial Imagery & Ordnance Survey Mapping** Recent aerial photography and OS mapping were used to assess current land use, habitat connectivity, and the wider landscape context.
- **Planning Portal and Local Authority Records** Relevant planning history and previous ecological assessments for the site and adjacent land were reviewed where available.
- **Horsham Green Infrastructure Strategy (2024):** The site was checked against the Horsham District Green Infrastructure Strategy and associated mapping to identify whether any part of the land falls within areas of high or medium strategic significance, such as Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, river corridors, or designated green infrastructure networks.

The desk study ensured the appraisal was informed by the most current and robust biodiversity data available, supporting robust assessment of ecological constraints and opportunities in line with CIEEM (2017) and best practice.

Field Survey

A walkover survey was conducted on 2 January 2026 to undertake a walkover, habitat condition and species suitability assessment and to assess the structures on site for bat suitability, in accordance with the CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Conservation Trust (2023) guidance. The survey was undertaken by suitably qualified ecologists with experience in habitat assessment and protected species evaluation, and in suitable weather conditions to maximise detectability.

Weather conditions during the site walkover:

- Weather: broken cloud (20%), dry, Beaufort 2, 2-4 °C.
- Visibility: excellent (>1 km) enabling clear identification of field characters.
- Precipitation: none during survey period

Habitats were classified using the latest UK Habitat Classification system (UKHab v2.01). This hierarchical and standardised approach supports detailed baseline habitat assessment and aligns with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric requirements.

Survey methodology included:

- Systematic mapping of all habitat types and features using GPS-enabled devices and Coreo (2025) in the field app.
- Assessment of habitat condition, structure, and species composition for each habitat parcel.
- Quadrats were used in each habitat parcel and a DAFOR scale¹ was applied to determine the presence of each species within the quadrat.
- Identification and recording of features with potential to support protected and priority species (e.g., mature trees, hedgerows, ponds, buildings, log piles).
- Direct observation and habitat suitability assessment for protected and notable species, considering both field evidence and desk study records.
- Use of photographic records and detailed target notes to document key habitats, features, and any signs of species presence (e.g., tracks, droppings, nests).
- Assessment of habitat connectivity and potential ecological corridors within and adjacent to the site.

Where access was restricted or visibility limited, this was noted, and the potential implications for survey completeness were assessed.

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

¹ The DAFOR scale (Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, Rare) provides a semi-quantitative estimate of vegetation presence and distribution.

The daytime bat walkover incorporating PRA was completed on 2 January 2026 and comprised a detailed inspection of the proposed development area through direct internal and external access affording close examination of potential bat entry/exit points, potential roosting sites and evidence of occupation (droppings, dead bats etc.). General resources for bats such as commuting and foraging habitat and wider habitat connectivity were also reviewed.

Buildings were assigned a roost suitability category (negligible, low, moderate or high) in accordance with Table 4.1 of the BCT (2023) guidance.

The PRA was undertaken by a professionally competent ecologist with extensive experience in bat survey methodology and Preliminary Roost Assessment.

Quality Assurance

All survey work and data analysis were subject to internal quality assurance procedures, including review by a senior ecologist. The methodology was designed to meet or exceed the requirements of CIEEM, DEFRA, Natural England, and Horsham District Council.

Limitations

Ecological systems are dynamic and subject to seasonal and inter-annual variation. No single survey can conclusively determine the absence of all species at all times of year.

The walkover survey and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment were undertaken on 2 January 2026, which falls outside the optimal botanical survey season (generally April to September). As a result, ephemeral and seasonal herbaceous species may not have been fully represented at the time of survey. However, habitat types, structural composition and management regime were clearly identifiable.

January also falls outside the peak bat activity period (May-September). Whilst building inspections for roost suitability can be undertaken year-round in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (2023) guidance, winter timing may reduce the likelihood of detecting transient summer roosting activity or visible signs associated with maternity use.

All buildings were internally and externally inspected where safe access was possible. All visible structural elements, roof spaces, beam junctions, wall interfaces, gaps and crevices capable of supporting roosting bats were examined using appropriate visual inspection techniques. No areas were identified where access constraints materially restricted the ability to assess bat roost suitability. The Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment therefore constitutes a robust appraisal of bat roost suitability based on the features present at the time of survey.

The findings of this report are based on the site conditions observed on 2 January 2026. Changes to building condition, vegetation structure, land management or disturbance regime after the survey date may alter the ecological baseline.

Data validity

In accordance with CIEEM (2019) advice on the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys, this report should be considered valid for 24 months from the date of the most recent survey, subject to no material change occurring within the site

Results

Desk Study Results

Designated Sites

Statutory Designations

No statutory designations (e.g. SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar) were identified within 1 km of the site.

Non-Statutory Designations

No non-statutory designated sites (e.g. Local Wildlife Sites/SINCs) were identified within 1 km of the site.

Priority Habitats and Species Records

Records returned from the data search (filtered to 2015-2026) indicate that the wider landscape supports priority habitat in the form of ancient and/or ghyll woodland and includes records of several protected and notable species groups, including bats, notable birds, and Section 41 priority species such as hedgehog and widespread reptiles (slow-worm and common lizard).

The findings, summarised in Table 1, highlight the presence of key habitats such as deciduous and ancient woodland, as well as records of protected species including bats and birds. Additionally, several Section 41 Priority species were identified.

There were no European Protected Species licence records within 1km of the site.

Table 1 Summary of Priority Habitats, Protected Species, and Other Notable Section 41 Species Recorded Within or Adjacent to the Site and Within a 1km Radius

Category	Feature/Species	Details / Records
Priority Habitat	Ancient woodland and or lowland deciduous woodland	Recorded as present within the 1 km search area.
Bats (EPS)	Serotine Eptesicus serotinus	Records within 1 km (2016, 2019). Includes references to roost use in nearby buildings within the search area.
Bats (EPS)	Brown long-eared bat Plecotus auritus	Records within 1 km.
Bats (EPS)	Common pipistrelle Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Records within 1 km
Bats (EPS)	Soprano pipistrelle Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Record within 1 km
Bats (EPS)	Noctule Nyctalus noctula	Record within 1 km
Birds (protected / notable)	Red Kite Milvus milvus	Multiple records within 1 km
Birds (protected / notable)	Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos	Multiple records within 1 km
Birds (protected / notable)	Barn Owl Tyto alba	Records within 1 km

Category	Feature/Species	Details / Records
Birds (Section 41 examples)	Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i> , Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> , Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i> , Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Multiple records within 1 km
Mammals (Section 41)	Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Record within 1 km
Reptiles (protected / Section 41)	Slow-worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i> ; Common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Records within 1 km
Other notable species	Long-winged conehead <i>Conocephalus fuscus</i>	Record within 1 km
Invasive non-native	Canada goose; Egyptian goose; Grey squirrel; Black swan	Records within 1 km

Field Survey Results

Habitats

There were three distinct habitats recorded across the site, a habitat map showing the location and distribution of habitats is provided in Appendix 1. Table 2 provides a summary of the habitats found across the site, a description and justification for the habitat classification according to UKHab and BNG requirements, the habitat condition, total area in hectares (ha) and where applicable species lists are provided along with a DAFOR scale score based on the distribution of species within quadrats that were surveyed in each habitat parcel.

Table 2 UKHab habitat descriptions for the site including defining species compositions.

Habitat (UKHab Code)	Type	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Habitat Photo	Description/ Justification	Plant (combined quadrats)	Species list of
U1a - Buildings		0.012		This habitat comprises three agricultural buildings (Buildings 1-3) constructed of brick, timber framing and corrugated sheet roofing. The primary barn (Building 1) is a single-storey brick-built agricultural structure with exposed internal roof trusses and concrete floor slab. Building 2 is a smaller timber-framed tool store with corrugated cladding. Building 3 comprises an open-fronted agricultural building. The structures are actively used and well-maintained. Roof voids are largely open and exposed with no enclosed loft spaces. Floors are hardstanding or compacted substrate. The buildings provide negligible intrinsic habitat value for flora and limited ecological resource other than potential nesting opportunities for common bird species or occasional bat roosting potential (assessed separately). Vegetation is absent within the building footprints.	None recorded within built footprint.	

Habitat Type (UKHab Code)	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Habitat Photo	Description/ Justification	Plant Species (combined list of quadrats)
u1b - Other developed land	0.007		This habitat comprises areas of concrete hardstanding and compacted substrate immediately surrounding the buildings and forming the access yard. Surfaces are heavily compacted and largely impermeable, with very limited vegetation colonisation. The habitat is of negligible ecological value, offering minimal foraging or refuge opportunities. Occasional ruderal colonisation may occur at margins where substrate meets grassland.	Annual meadow grass (<i>Poa annua</i>) Broad-leaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>) Common chickweed (<i>Stellaria media</i>)
g4 - Modified grassland	0.072		The majority of the undeveloped site area comprises modified grassland associated with agricultural management. The sward is species-poor and dominated by competitive grass species indicative of regular management and nutrient enrichment. The grassland lacks indicators of species-rich or semi-improved meadow. Structure is short to medium in height with evidence of grazing and mowing. No areas of marshy grassland or unimproved grassland were identified. The habitat provides limited ecological value, functioning primarily as low-quality foraging habitat for common invertebrates and potentially common bird species. It does not meet criteria for Priority Grassland habitat.	Perennial ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) Cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>) Yorkshire fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>) White clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>) Creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>) Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.) Ribwort plantain (<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>)
u2 - Linear features (ditch)	0.054		A narrow linear drainage feature is present within/adjacent to the site boundary. The channel appears shallow and seasonally influenced, functioning primarily as agricultural drainage rather than a natural watercourse. At the time of survey, flow was limited and no aquatic vegetation of note was recorded. Banks are largely grass-dominated with occasional ruderal species. The feature does not exhibit characteristics of a Priority Habitat watercourse. The channel may provide limited connectivity for amphibians or invertebrates within the wider landscape but is of low ecological value within the site context.	Perennial ryegrass Yorkshire fog Creeping buttercup Broad-leaved dock Soft rush (<i>Juncus effusus</i>)

Protected and Priority Species

Badgers

No recent records of [REDACTED] were returned within the 1 km desk study search area (2015-2026). The site comprises buildings, hardstanding and small areas of modified grassland, with no woodland edge, embankments or scrub habitat suitable for sett establishment. During the walkover survey on 2 January 2026, no evidence of [REDACTED] activity was recorded, including setts, latrines, snuffle holes or tracks. While badgers are widespread within rural West Sussex, the site itself offers limited suitability and is considered to be of low value for this species. No further survey is required.

Bats

Desk study records confirm the presence of several bat species within 1 km of the site, including serotine, brown long-eared bat, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and noctule. A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was undertaken on 2 January 2026, and all buildings were inspected internally and externally. The structures are actively used agricultural buildings with exposed roof structures, limited enclosed voids and regular disturbance. All visible crevices, roof junctions and structural elements were examined safely, and no evidence of bat occupation (droppings, staining, carcasses or feeding remains) was identified.

All trees on site will be retained and protected during development. No features indicative of high bat roost potential (such as cavities, splits or lifted bark) were identified within trees inside the red line boundary during the walkover survey.

See Appendix 2 for detailed PRA findings. The buildings are assessed as negligible-low suitability and precautionary measures are proposed.

Birds

The desk study identified records of notable bird species within 1 km, including red kite, barn owl, nightingale, skylark, yellowhammer, song thrush and cuckoo, several of which are Section 41 Priority Species. The site contains limited suitable nesting habitat, although buildings and boundary vegetation may provide opportunities for common breeding birds. No active nests were recorded during the January survey; however, winter timing does not allow confirmation of breeding absence. All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and works affecting vegetation or buildings should therefore avoid the nesting season (March-August inclusive), or be preceded by a precautionary check.

Dormice

Dormouse records occur within the wider 1 km landscape; however, the site itself lacks suitable habitat. There is no woodland within the red line boundary and only limited hedgerow connectivity. The site is dominated by open modified grassland and buildings, which do not provide suitable nesting or foraging habitat for dormice. The site is therefore assessed as having negligible suitability for this species, and no further survey is required.

Great crested newt (GCN)

No ponds or standing water bodies are present within the site boundary, and the surrounding habitats comprise hardstanding and short-managed grassland with limited refugia. While amphibian records exist within the wider landscape, the site does not provide suitable terrestrial or aquatic habitat for great crested newt. The site is therefore assessed as having negligible suitability for GCN, and no further survey is required.

Invertebrates

The site is dominated by modified grassland and developed surfaces, with no semi-natural habitats, species-rich grassland, wetland features or deadwood resources that would support notable invertebrate assemblages. Although a record of long-winged conehead occurs within 1 km, the site does not contain tall rough grassland or suitable habitat for this species. The ecological value of the site for invertebrates is considered low.

Reptiles

Records of slow-worm and common lizard were identified within 1 km of the site. The habitat within the red line boundary comprises short, managed grassland, hardstanding and active buildings, with no south-facing banks, unmanaged rough grassland or refugia features such as rubble or log piles. Habitat suitability for reptiles is therefore considered low, and no further survey is required.

Invasive Non-native species

No invasive non-native plant species were identified within the site boundary during the walkover survey. Records within the wider 1 km search area relate to non-native bird and mammal species (e.g. Canada goose, Egyptian goose and grey squirrel), which do not present constraints to the proposed development.

Other Notable species

Hedgehog, a Section 41 Priority Species, has been recorded within 1 km of the site. The site provides limited shelter opportunities due to the absence of dense scrub or connected hedgerow habitat within the red line boundary. While occasional foraging use cannot be ruled out, the site is unlikely to be of significant importance for hedgehog populations.

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

The results of the PRA are provided in Appendix 2.

Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints

Bats

The buildings on site have been assessed as having negligible to low suitability for roosting bats (see Appendix 2). No evidence of bat occupation was recorded during the survey. However, bats and their roosts are legally protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

As the existing buildings are due to be removed to allow for the proposed development, there is a residual risk of disturbance should undetected bats be present within minor crevice features. Although the likelihood is low, works affecting roofing materials or cladding could potentially impact roosting bats if present. This represents a minor ecological constraint that can be addressed through precautionary working methods.

Birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Although no active nests were recorded during the January survey, the buildings and grassland margins provide limited nesting opportunities for common bird species.

Any vegetation clearance or building alteration undertaken during the nesting season (March–August inclusive) could result in disturbance or destruction of nests. Timing of works therefore represents a potential constraint.

Reptiles

Desk study records confirm the presence of slow-worm and common lizard within 1 km of the site. However, habitat within the red line boundary is dominated by short-managed grassland and hardstanding, with no unmanaged rough grassland, south-facing banks or refugia features.

The site is assessed as low suitability for reptiles and no further survey is required. Reptiles are therefore not considered a significant constraint to the proposed development.

Great crested newt

No ponds or standing water bodies are present within the site boundary, and the terrestrial habitat is limited in quality and extent. The site is assessed as negligible suitability for great crested newt.

GCN are therefore not considered a constraint to the proposed development.

Hazel Dormice

Dormouse records occur within the wider landscape; however, the site contains no woodland and only limited boundary connectivity. The red line boundary is dominated by modified grassland and built form.

Dormice are not considered a constraint to the development proposals.

Invertebrates

The site supports species-poor modified grassland and developed surfaces, with no habitats of high invertebrate value such as species-rich grassland, wetland, scrub mosaic or deadwood assemblages.

Invertebrates are therefore not considered a significant ecological constraint.

Invasive Non-Native Species

No invasive non-native plant species were identified during the survey. Records within 1 km relate to widespread non-native bird and mammal species which do not represent a development constraint.

No biosecurity constraints are currently identified.

Designated Habitats and Priority Habitats and Species

No statutory or non-statutory designated sites occur within 1 km of the site. Priority habitat (ancient woodland/lowland deciduous woodland) is present within the wider landscape but does not extend into or adjoin the site boundary.

The development site itself comprises modified grassland and built form and does not contain Priority Habitat.

The presence of protected and Section 41 species records within the wider 1 km landscape reflects the rural setting rather than specific constraints within the red line boundary.

Opportunities

Although ecological constraints are limited, the proposed development presents opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and NPPF (2024).

Opportunities include:

- Installation of integrated bat boxes within the converted building (e.g. integrated bat bricks or soffit tubes)
- Provision of bird nesting features such as swift bricks or sparrow terraces
- Retention and sensitive management of grassland margins
- Enhancement of boundary vegetation through supplementary native planting
- Sensitive lighting design to maintain dark corridors along site edges
- Use of native species in any landscaping scheme

These measures will ensure that the development delivers measurable biodiversity enhancements in line with local planning policy and national requirements.

Mitigation Hierarchy

The development has been designed in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy.

Avoidance has been achieved through:

- Retention of the primary building footprint
- Avoidance of encroachment into woodland or hedgerow habitats
- No loss of Priority Habitat

Mitigation measures include:

- Precautionary bat working methods
- Timing of works to avoid bird nesting season (or pre-works checks)
- Sensitive lighting design

Given the limited ecological value of the site, compensation is not required. Enhancement measures will provide net biodiversity gains.

Further Survey Recommendations

Based on the findings of this assessment, no further surveys are required for bats, reptiles, great crested newt or dormouse.

However:

- A pre-commencement bat check should be undertaken within 24 hours of works affecting roof materials.
- Vegetation clearance should avoid the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive), or be preceded by a nesting bird check by a competent ecologist.

Subject to implementation of the precautionary measures outlined in this report, no further ecological surveys are required to support the planning application.

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Appendix 1 – Habitat Map - UKHab/BNG



Appendix 2 - Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) – Agricultural outbuildings

A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on 2 January 2026 to assess the suitability of the buildings within the red line boundary for roosting bats. The assessment was completed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition) and the CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Edition).

The purpose of the PRA was to determine whether any of the buildings present suitable features for roosting bats and whether further emergence or activity surveys are required to inform the planning application.

The survey comprised detailed internal and external inspection of all structures, including assessment of roof voids, brickwork, timber interfaces, cladding joints and any other crevice features capable of supporting bats. The wider habitat context and connectivity were also considered.

Buildings on site

The site contains three agricultural buildings, as shown in Appendix 1, clustered centrally within an area of modified grassland. These comprise:

- Building 1 - Main brick agricultural barn
- Building 2 - Smaller timber-framed tool store
- Building 3 - Open-fronted agricultural building.

There are no additional building complexes or ancillary hay barns beyond these three structures.

Survey Methodology

The PRA was undertaken through direct internal and external inspection of all buildings.

The following were systematically examined:

- Roof void structure and depth
- Wall/roof junctions
- Gaps beneath corrugated sheets
- Brickwork defects and mortar joints
- Timber beam interfaces
- Window and door lintels
- Crevices between cladding panels
- Floor surfaces and stored materials
- Evidence of bat occupation

Buildings were assessed against Table 4.1 of BCT (2023) to assign suitability categories:

- Negligible

- Low
- Moderate
- High

In accordance with BCT (2023), the assessment considered the potential for the buildings to support maternity roosts, day roosts, transitional roosts and hibernation roosts, recognising that suitability varies depending on roost type and species ecology.

Survey Conditions

The survey was undertaken on 2 January 2026 in dry winter conditions with good visibility. All areas of the buildings were safely accessible. No safety constraints limited inspection. Artificial lighting was not required to assess structural features.

Although January falls outside peak bat activity season, building suitability assessment can be undertaken year-round in accordance with BCT guidance.

Building Assessments

Building 1 - Main Agricultural Barn

Suitability: Negligible to Low

Building 1 is a single-storey brick agricultural structure measuring approximately 5.4 m by 13.6 m internally. It comprises single-skin brickwork with brick piers, exposed steel angle purlins and timber wall plates supporting corrugated asbestos cement roofing sheets. Internally, the roof structure is fully exposed, and no enclosed loft void is present. The building has a concrete slab floor and is actively used for tool and hay storage.

Inspection identified minor gaps at corrugated sheet overlaps and limited crevice potential at roof-to-wall junctions and timber interfaces. However, the building lacks enclosed roof compartments or thermally stable voids. The structure is highly ventilated, well lit during use and subject to regular disturbance associated with agricultural storage activity.

No evidence of bat occupation was recorded. Specifically:

- No bat droppings were observed on beams, ledges or floor surfaces.
- No urine staining, grease marks or feeding remains were present.
- No carcasses or skeletal remains were identified.
- Cobwebs within roof junctions were intact and undisturbed.

Whilst minor crevices are present at sheet overlaps and roof-wall junctions, these are shallow and lack depth, thermal stability and protection from disturbance. The absence of an enclosed loft void and the fully visible internal structure significantly limit roosting potential.

Building 2 - Tool Store

Suitability: Negligible to Low

Building 2 is a smaller timber-framed agricultural store with corrugated cladding and roofing. The roof void is minimal, and the building is actively used for equipment storage. While small panel gaps and timber joints provide limited crevice potential, the structure lacks enclosed voids or sheltered cavities. Thermal properties are poor due to the lightweight construction and high ventilation.

The building is subject to regular disturbance and internal lighting during use. No evidence of bat occupation was recorded during inspection. Building 2 is therefore assessed as having negligible to low suitability for roosting bats.

Building 3 – Open fronted agricultural building

Suitability: Negligible

Building 3 comprises an open-fronted agricultural building constructed from timber framing with corrugated roofing. The structure has no enclosed roof void and is highly ventilated, with large open access points allowing significant light penetration and exposure to weather conditions.

The internal environment includes livestock activity, bedding material and associated ammonia odours. These factors create a harsh and unstable microclimate unsuitable for bat roosting. No crevices or sheltered cavities capable of supporting roosting bats were identified.

No evidence of bat occupation was recorded. Building 3 is therefore assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Habitat Context

The buildings are located within a parcel of modified grassland surrounded by agricultural land and boundary vegetation beyond the red line boundary. The immediate site offers limited foraging value, and the buildings do not form part of a defined commuting corridor. While bats are known to occur within the wider 1 km landscape, the site itself does not provide high-quality roosting habitat.

Overall Site Assessment

The three buildings present negligible to low suitability for roosting bats. The key limiting factors include:

- Absence of enclosed and thermally stable roof voids
- Lightweight and highly ventilated construction
- Shallow crevice availability
- Active agricultural use and disturbance
- Limited structural complexity

No evidence of current or historic bat use was recorded within any building.

Further Survey Requirements

In accordance with Table 7.2 of the BCT (2023) guidance:

- Buildings of negligible suitability do not require further survey.
- Buildings of low suitability typically require one emergence survey visit where roosting potential is credible.

Although Building 1 contains limited minor crevice features, these are shallow, fully exposed and lack connection to enclosed or thermally stable cavities. All buildings are actively used, highly ventilated and lack structural features typically associated with day, maternity or hibernation roosts. On this basis, the roosting potential is considered negligible to low and no further survey is considered proportionate.

Recommendations

Although no evidence of bat occupation was recorded, bats and their roosts are legally protected. As a precautionary measure:

- A pre-commencement check by a suitably experienced bat ecologist should be undertaken within 24 hours of works affecting roofing materials.
- Roof sheeting and cladding should be removed carefully using a soft-strip approach and hand tools.
- Site operatives should receive a toolbox talk on bat legislation and identification.
- Works should cease immediately if a bat is discovered, and a licensed bat ecologist should be consulted

Legal Compliance

All bat species and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The precautionary measures outlined above are designed to ensure compliance with this legislation.

Enhancement Opportunities

The proposed development provides opportunities to enhance habitat provision for bats through installation of integrated bat boxes within the converted building or on retained structures. Sensitive external lighting design and retention of dark boundary corridors will further support commuting and foraging activity within the wider landscape.

Conclusion

All buildings at Gorelands Farm have been thoroughly inspected and are assessed as having negligible to low suitability for roosting bats. No evidence of bat occupation was recorded. The precautionary measures outlined above are considered proportionate and sufficient to ensure legal compliance without the need for further survey.

References

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Photos

	Building 1. View of building from looking east to west.
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Side view of Building 1.



Front north view of Building 1.



Internal view of Building 1.



Internal view of Building 1.



Building 2. Front view, access to internal space via gaps in doors and roofing.



Internal view of Building 2.



Building 3. View of building looking south east from the site.



Internal view of Building 3.