Our ref: 6612 012 let consultee response

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11 November 2026

Linsey King
Horsham District Council
Albery House
Springfield Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 2GB

Sent By E-Mail Only

Dear Linsey,

Thakeham Mushrooms, Storrington Road, Thakeham, Pulborough –Planning Application DC/26/0266

Aspect Ecology is advising the applicant in regard to ecological matters in respect of the above application. In this regard we have been passed comments from Horsham District Council's (HDC) Ecologist which relates to Black Redstart. The presence of Black Redstart on site does not preclude development, with legal protections for this species focused solely on the protection of active nests (in common with all birds in the UK), as well as protecting this species from disturbance whilst nesting.

I am pleased to address the comments overleaf, within the enclosed Table. In summary, sufficient information is available to conclude that the potential presence of Black Redstart does not present an ecological constraint that would prevent determination of the application. The species could be appropriately safeguarded through a combination of precautionary working methods, ecological monitoring where necessary and the provision of targeted enhancement measures secured by condition.

I trust that our comments provide a full and helpful response to the queries raised and assist HDC with positively assessing the proposed scheme. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Andy Holyoak
Associate

[redacted]

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Table 1: Response to HDC's Ecologist (received November 2026)

Topic	Comments	Aspect Ecology Response
Black Redstart	*"If Black Redstarts are confirmed as present on the site, the LPA would require further information prior to determination. They are a Schedule 1 species and, as such, are protected from disturbance, as well as from direct killing, injury, etc.* *If Black Redstarts are confirmed to be present on the site, a mitigation and compensation strategy would be required prior to determination. This would need to detail any works requiring a licence, the timing of works to avoid impacts on nesting birds, the results of surveys undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist for Schedule 1 species, details of any buffer zones, and details of the proposed compensation habitat.* *The potential presence of Black Redstarts was not considered within the PEA and, therefore, further information would be required to address this.."*	Black Redstart is listed on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern as an Amber species (with low numbers present in the UK, and only first recorded in the 1920s), whilst at a European level the species has a conservation status of 'least concern'. The species receives protections under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to prevent damage or destruction of active nests (in common with all UK bird species), and also receives additional protection under Schedule 1 against disturbance whilst nesting/breeding (but not at other times of the year). The potential presence of Black Redstart on site therefore does not preclude development, but does require consideration of safeguards and mitigation measures (with respect to any nesting activity) during any permitted development works. With regard to licensing, there is no exemption for the disturbance to nesting schedule 1 birds for development purposes. As such, a development licence is not available with respect to this species, and the applicant would not be able to acquire a licence for any activities related to this species. From the photographic evidence presented, it is acknowledged that Black Redstart is present in the vicinity of the site. Given the number of breeding pairs in the UK (estimated 58 pairs[1]) it is highly unlikely there is more than a single breeding pair present on/adjacent to the site (if indeed, this species is breeding on/adjacent to site). Black Redstart favour rocky, stony, boulder-strewn or craggy terrain, and as such (if present in site) the most likely nesting opportunities would be within the walls or roofs of the existing buildings on site, or within the land offsite to the west (which appears to comprise the remains of previously demolished buildings and hardstanding). As highlighted in the Ecological Appraisal, the majority of the remaining habitats present on the site are common in the surrounding area and are unlikely to support a rare assemblage of species. To be clear, the presence of Black Redstart on site does not preclude development, with legal protections for this species focused solely on the protection of active nests (in common with all birds in the UK), as well as protecting this species from disturbance whilst nesting. Given the potential presence of a single pair (maximum) of Black Redstart on/adjacent to the site, we would recommend adopting a precautionary approach to demolition/site clearance activities. This will be set out in full within a mitigation and compensation strategy, to encompass the below principles;

[1] Avian Population Estimates Panel (APEP) (https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/publications/apep4-population-estimates-birds-great-britain-uk-2020.pdf), viewed 09/11/2026

		Demolition of the buildings on site will ideally be undertaken outside the nesting bird season to avoid any potential disturbance of nesting Black Redstarts (if this species is breeding on/adjacent to site). Should demolition be undertaken during the nesting bird season, nesting bird surveys will be undertaken prior to any demolition/site clearance works. Where nesting Black Redstarts are recorded within buildings, safeguards will be implemented to protecting nesting birds, including buffer zones if works are required in vicinity of identified active nest sites. Such buffer zones will be dynamic, and the extent of any buffer zone to any nest will be based upon the nature of the works that will take place. For example, where demolition works are to take place within vicinity of nesting Black Redstarts (should they be present), no mechanical demolition will be permissible, but hand removal of asbestos will be acceptable. A full specification of safeguards will be produced once a construction plan is finalised, so there is clarity on the extent of proposed demolition/site clearance methodologies, and each task can be assigned an appropriate buffer zone (should such works be undertaken in vicinity to an active Black Redstart nest). In terms of compensation, the proposals already include the provision of sufficient habitat to provide food sources for this generalist feeder. Instead, compensation will focus on the inclusion of specialised nest boxes throughout the site to provide suitable nesting opportunities. This will take the form of integrated bird bricks, located at height on new buildings, all of which can be secured by condition. Given the above, sufficient information is available to conclude that the potential presence of Black Redstart does not present an ecological constraint that would prevent determination of the application. The species could be appropriately safeguarded through a combination of precautionary working methods, ecological monitoring where necessary and the provision of targeted enhancement measures secured by condition.