

Jack Summers
National Trust,
Heelis Kemble Drive
Swindon
SN2 2NA

18th December 2025

RE: Letter report for the results of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment at 69-70 Silkhouse, Cote Lanes, Kilmington, Wiltshire, BA12 6QZ.

Dear Jack,

Thank you for instructing LC Ecological Services Ltd to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) in respect of your plans to repair and refurbish the cottage and storeroom at 69-70 Silkhouse, Cote Lanes, Kilmington, Wiltshire, BA12 6QZ.

Grid reference: ST 77319 35795

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment

Methodology

Vegetation

The habitat types within the site were noted during the survey undertaken by ecologist Nikkii Hesketh-Roberts on the 4th December 2025. Dominant plant species were recorded for each habitat present. Habitats were classified using the UK Habitat Classification methodology version 2.0 (UKHab, 2023). The survey included directly searching for legally protected and invasive species of plants and categorising any habitats of ecological value that were encountered. A general description of the vegetation was also noted, listing species encountered and scoring their abundance using the DAFOR scale shown below.

D	Dominant
A	Abundant
F	Frequent
O	Occasional
R	Rare
L	Local (used as a prefix to any of the above)

Protected species

Badgers

A direct search of the site, and a 30 metres radius outside of its boundaries (where accessible), was undertaken for signs of badger (*Meles meles*). Signs of badger may include setts, dung pits, latrines, paths or hairs on fences and vegetation. Any setts encountered were classified according to the number of entrances and the extent of their use.

Bats

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 4th December 2025 by licenced ecologist Nikkii Hesketh-Roberts (Natural England Class II licence) and ecologist Alex Sinclair. The survey involved a direct search for evidence of bats on the internal and external features of the target buildings (including droppings and staining), while also assessing the buildings on their potential to support roosting bats.

Bats roost in a wide variety of sites within buildings, with many species roosting in cracks and crevices, within brick work, under slates and tiles, and within timber beam joints where they are difficult to see.

Bats often access roosts at key areas such as the gable end, soffits, barge boards, ridge tiles, between double lintels, around window frames, through open joints in the brickwork or broken tiles through open doors / entrances to the buildings.

The presence of roosting bats can be identified through signs such as accumulations of moth or butterfly wings, staining, bat droppings or bats themselves. The absence of these signs does not, however, conclusively indicate that bats are not using a building. An assessment was therefore made for the potential of the buildings to support bats based on the following scale, in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's good survey guidelines (Collins, 2023):

Table 1: Criteria for assessing bat roosting potential in buildings.

Confirmed roost	Evidence of bat occupation found
High roosting potential	With significant roosting potential, either because they contain a large number of suitable features or those features present appear optimal. Have the potential to support high conservation status roosts.
Moderate roosting potential	Features with moderate roosting potential, with roosting features appearing less suitable, unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
Low roosting potential	Property with few features suitable for roosting by individual bats opportunistically at any time of year
Negligible potential	No obvious habitat features on site however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
None	No habitat features available.

Limitations

The cottage rood voids were not safe to fully enter as no boarding was present and therefore descriptions were taken from the hatch.

Hazel dormouse

The habitat on site was assessed for the potential to support dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), which are found in habitats such as woodlands, scrub and hedgerows with good connectivity and suitable food plants. Satellite images were used to assess the connectivity of any suitable habitat present on the site to other areas of woodland and hedgerow networks.

Great crested newt

Suitable breeding ponds are essential to support populations of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) although they actually only spend a relatively short period of the year in the ponds during the spring for breeding. The remainder of the year is spent in suitable 'foraging' habitat such as tall grassland and woodland. During the winter the great crested newt hibernates, often amongst the roots of trees and scrub or in places such as piles of rubble, amongst foundations of buildings or under fallen trees and logs.

Great crested newts are known to forage up to five hundred metres from their breeding sites and suitable habitats that fall within five hundred metres must be considered even in situations where the breeding site itself will not be affected. Ponds within a five hundred metre radius were therefore identified during this survey and habitats within and immediately adjacent to the site were assessed in terms of their suitability as foraging habitat. Further specialist surveys will be recommended where appropriate.

Reptiles

Reptiles are widespread in habitats that provide both cover, in the form of scrub or tall vegetation, and basking areas such as areas of hard standing or short grassland communities. Piles of debris or rubble also provide excellent cover and hibernation sites for reptiles. Effective survey for reptiles is time-consuming and labour intensive involving the use of artificial refuges (usually roofing felt or carpet tiles) which attract individuals. Habitats within the site were therefore assessed for their suitability to support reptiles and further specialist surveys or mitigation recommended where appropriate.

Nesting birds

The buildings and habitats on site were assessed for their potential to support breeding, foraging and overwintering birds, including both arboreal and ground-nesting species, any rare, specialised, protected, notable or declining species, as well as more common and widespread species.

Results

Vegetated garden u1, 828, 107

Rear garden

The lawn is sparse and disturbed in places with young grass and herbs growing through. The rear garden is managed with a sward height of proximately five centimetres at the time of survey. The rear comprised dominant creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), with abundant cleavers (*Galium aparine*), frequent and locally dominant ivy (*Hedera helix*), frequent cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) with locally frequent honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), occasional pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and *Chrysanthemum* species. With rare sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) along the southern boundary. The remnants of gravel and stones are present directly adjacent to the house. A fence is present along part of the southeast boundary.

Front garden

The front lawn comprises modified grassland with a few herbaceous species. It is well-managed with a sward height of proximately five centimetres at the time of survey. The front garden is comprised dominant creeping bent, with occasional red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

Developed land sealed surface u1b

A brick path is present adjacent to the house with some gravel. A concrete patio is also present. Scattered bricks are present along with some sleeper beams used to create raised beds which have deteriorated. Stone edging is present along the grassland with many crevices, that are also present within the bricks and breeze blocks.

The hardstanding has been heavily colonised with ephemeral species. The species comprised abundant creeping bent and locally abundant cleavers and herb bennet, frequent dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), occasional mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) and bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*).

Protected species

Badgers

Despite a thorough search no evidence of badgers was recorded on site or in the immediate surrounds.

No further recommendations have been made.

Bats

Buildings

The survey was undertaken on 69-70 Silkhouse on the 4th December 2025. The weather conditions were wet and overcast, with a temperature of 9°C, cloud cover of 8/8 Okta and wind 2/12 on the Beaufort Scale.

Cottage

- The main part of the building is a two-storey cottage constructed of stone. The roof is thatched with dormers in the thatch.
- Windows and doors are constructed of wood and are in good condition.
- Wooden fascias are present on the northern and southern elevations and appear well sealed.
- A small gap is present above the fascia on southern elevation.
- Gaps are present in the render on the southern extension.
- A bird's nest was noted on the southern elevation in between the wiring and the thatch.
- There are two voids within the main cottage. Neither void was safe to fully enter as no boarding was present and therefore descriptions were taken from the hatch.
- Two internal chimney breasts are present. A gap is present on the western elevation of western-most chimney.
- No roof lining is present, with visible thatch between the rafters.
- The roof voids measured approximately 2 metres wide by 1 metre height at the apex.
- No light ingress was observed with the voids appearing very dark and well-sealed.
- The voids were heavily cobwebbed.
- No evidence of bat was observed.
- The cottage was assessed as holding **low** potential to support roosting bats, due to the limited access points.

Storeroom

- The Storeroom is a one-storey brick and stone construction, with clay tiles on a hipped roof.
- There are several gaps underneath the tiles adjacent to the main cottage on the northern elevation. Gaps in the tiles were also recorded on the southern elevation and underneath bonnet tiles on the western elevation.
- Wooden beams are present internally, creating perching opportunities.
- Gaps in the tiles, located on the western and southern elevations, create access points into the storeroom.

- Crevices between the wooden beams and wall provide roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bats.
- The storeroom was assessed as holding **moderate** potential to support roosting bats due to the multiple access points and perching opportunities.

Further recommendations are required.

Hazel dormouse

No evidence of hazel dormouse was recorded on site, furthermore, no foraging and nesting habitat for this arboreal species was on site.

No further recommendations have been made.

Reptiles

The site is considered unsuitable for basking and foraging reptiles due to the gardens being poor quality habitats. At the time of the survey both gardens are well maintained, with short swards of grass throughout each garden. There is suitable habitat in the wider area, however, there is no connective habitat on site connecting to the wider area.

No further recommendations have been made.

Nesting birds

The cottage and storeroom provide nesting opportunities for a number of bird species, such as blue tits (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) under the wire meshing.

Further recommendations are required.

Conclusion and recommendations

Bats

The cottage was assessed as holding **low potential** for roosting bats following the preliminary roost assessment survey, due to external crevices considered suitable for crevice-dwelling bats. The storeroom was assessed as holding **moderate potential** for roosting bats following the preliminary roost assessment survey, due to the multiple access and perching opportunities.

Further recommendations

In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) survey guidelines (Collins 2023), buildings with **low potential** require one dusk emergence between May and August and buildings with **moderate potential** require two dusk emergence surveys between May

and September, with at least one survey between May and August. Surveys must be spaced a minimum of three weeks apart.

The dusk emergence surveys involve surveyors positioned around the building covering all potential access and egress points. Dusk surveys will commence 15 minutes before sunset and continue for up to 2 hours after sunset.

Surveyors will use bat detectors and recording devices to record any bats that are seen emerging from or re-entering the building, along with general bat activity within the vicinity of the site. The proposed surveys will be enough to satisfy the likely absence of roosting bats, however in the event that bats are recorded emerging from or re-entering the buildings during the surveys, further surveys may be required to characterise the roost, determining number of bats, roost type and points of access that bats are using to enter the roost. This information is necessary if a bat mitigation licence is required.

Nesting birds

The following precautions should negate risk of harming, injuring or contributing to the demise of these species:

Further recommendations

Ideally works to the buildings should be completed outside the bird nesting season (1st March to 31st August). If this is not possible, a pre-works check will be required and if an active nest is identified, then works will be postponed until the young have fledged the nest.

This information is adequate to satisfy the Wiltshire Council requirements for preliminary ecological appraisal and preliminary roost assessment, however, if you have any queries or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes



Alex Sinclair BSc (hons),
Ecologist

Site photographs

All photographs were taken on the 4th December 2025.



Photo 1: Northern elevation.



Photo 2: Closed eaves/fascia on northern elevation.



Photo 3: Western elevation of the storeroom.



Photo 4: Gaps underneath tiles close to the cottage



Photo 5: Gaps underneath bonnet tiles and raised main tiles on western elevation of the storeroom.



Photo 6: Gap on the western elevation of the cottage.



Photo 7: Gaps underneath tiles on the southern elevation of the storeroom.



Photo 8: South elevation of the cottage.



Photo 9: Small gap above fascia on southern elevation.



Photo 10: Close up of the gap in the brickwork/render on the southern elevation of the cottage.



Photo 11: Looking west in the cottage void.



Photo 12: Looking east along the cottage void, heavily cobwebbed.



Photo 13: Internal south elevation of the storeroom.



Photo 14: Internal north elevation of the storeroom.



Photo 15: Front garden, on the northern side of the site.



Photo 16: Rear garden, on the southern side of the site.