



MPECOLOGY

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RE: FOLLY COTTAGE STABLES, LOWER RUDLOE, CORSHAM, SN13 0PB

PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

By email attachment

Date: 28/07/2026

Background

In July 2026, MPEcology were asked to undertake an ecological assessment of a site at Lower Rudloe near Corsham. A holiday let planned through conversion and extension of a timber stable building was granted consent in 2020 (20/01105/FUL). Variations enabling the alteration of windows, doors and a natural slate roof were also granted (PL/2023/04840 & PL/2026/00040).

During early stages of works, the existing timber frame was carefully inspected which revealed that the structure was not capable of safe retention or conversion. Wiltshire Council have advised that a new full planning application is required. A proposal identical in footprint, scale, massing and external appearance to the previously approved scheme has been submitted (PL/2026/04226) with a changed method of construction.

The site is located in the Green Belt and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the administrative boundary of Wiltshire Council at National Grid Reference ST 8422 7043.

Desk study

A formal desk study using Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC) was not undertaken. GIS data of Natural England was used to locate designated sites and in addition to local knowledge, web-based information was used to identify potential ecological constraints.

Box Mine Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was the nearest relevant designated site identified approximately 719m to the south. The SSSI forms part of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC. In addition to providing foraging habitat, an extensive network of caves, mines and man-made tunnels in the local area are used by hibernating and mating bats. The SAC is of particular note for Bechstein's (*Myotis bechsteinii*), Greater Horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) and Lesser Horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

Site visit

A site visit was carried out on the 20th July 2026. Trees and structures associated with the site were assessed for bat potential (Collins *et al*, 2023)¹.

Results

The proposed development site was an active construction site and semi-natural habitat was limited to a fringe of grassland, a roadside hedgerow and some small trees at the south-eastern end. The former stables had been dismantled and set aside as part of site investigation work to assess its suitability for conversion and did not offer any potential for roosting bats. None of the remaining trees within the site offered features with any potential for roosting bats.

Assessment

The habits offered negligible potential for protected species although bats and birds may utilise the trees as well as the roadside hedgerow for foraging.

Bats

No bat roosts were identified, and development will not lead to loss of trees with potential roost features. Light sensitive species including horseshoe and Myotis bat species are known to be present locally. The existing roadside hedgerow will be retained, and development is not considered likely to disrupt potential commuting routes associated with the lane. However, any lighting associated with the building will need to follow best practice principles, including:

- No mercury or metal halide lamps (LEDs are preferred);
- Lighting should be directed to where needed and spillage should be avoided (e.g. lighting directed only into doorways and luminaires designed appropriately, including the use of hoods, cowls, shields etc to avoid spillage);
- Downward-facing wall-mounted lighting should be used to keep light spill below 3m from ground level;
- Internal luminaries can be recessed where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill;
- Only illuminate areas which need to be lit and use the minimal level of lighting required to comply with guidance (such as Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (2005));
- Use movement sensors and short (1 minute) timers; and
- No lamps greater than 150W for security lighting.

Badgers

No setts were found within or immediately adjacent to the site. Badgers are not considered a constraint to development.

¹ Collins, J (Ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London, ISBN-978-1-7395126-0-6

Birds

All nesting birds are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to disturb nesting birds and development works will need to consider the possibility of nesting birds.

No evidence to suggest the presence of nesting birds was found during the visit and no vegetation clearance is considered necessary to facilitate construction. If vegetation clearance becomes necessary, it should be preceded by a check for nesting birds between March and September.

Great Crested Newts

Habitat associated with the construction site has been disturbed and was not considered suitable for herpetofauna (reptiles or amphibians). The site lies within an amber risk zone for Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) although only one waterbody was identified using Ordnance Survey mapping within 500m. A single pond to the south-east of Folly Cottage lies approximately 100m from the site, the buildings of Folly Cottage located in between.

If planning permission is granted, it is recommended that development is undertaken under a method statement to avoid impacting amphibians. This would include:

- *Habitat manipulation* – Ensure continued mowing of grassland habitat immediately adjacent to the development areas to remove potential refuge sites and encourage herpetofauna to use habitat adjacent to the site;
- *Pre-construction check* – Check to ensure management has maintained a short vegetation lacking potential for amphibians;
- *Seasonal timing* – Construction activities should avoid periods when amphibians may be moving to or from breeding sites (i.e. particularly wet weather in early spring). Most breeding adult newts will be at breeding ponds from late-March to early May. Site clearance and excavations during this period would minimize the risk of trapping amphibians within excavations;
- *Site management* – Excavations such as footings excavations should be covered at night or contain ramps allowing any trapped animals to escape. Any materials stored on site should be kept off the ground using pallets; and
- *Consultation* - In the unlikely event that Great Crested Newts are discovered, work will cease and further ecological advice should be sought.

Biodiversity enhancement

Enhancement of biodiversity for new developments is a requirement of both the Environment Act 2021 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In terms of the NPPF, three external bat boxes will be deployed (Beaumaris woodcrete bat boxes or equivalent). A tree-mounted box on a maple at the site entrance as well as two building mounted boxes. Locations will be chosen that allow

deployment in areas of partial sun, at a height of 3m or more, away from sources of disturbance such as light fittings.

Author

The author of this letter report was Matthew Pickard, an ecologist with over 20 years' environmental consultancy experience, a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv), full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and a licensed bat surveyor.

MPEcology

21st July 2026