



Land at Hill Farm, Charlton, Malmesbury, Wiltshire,
SN16 9DJ

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



September 2026

All Ecology Ltd

Tel: 01453 374109

Email: info@allecology.co.uk

Web: www.allecology.co.uk

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England and Wales Office

All Ecology Ltd,
Haw Street,
Coaley,
Dursley,
Gloucestershire,
GL11 5AY.

Scotland Office

All Ecology Ltd,
Achadh Nan Geadh,
Upper Kilchattan,
Colonsay,
PA61 7YR.

Tel: 01453 374109
Email: info@allecology.co.uk
Web: www.allecology.co.uk

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The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by All Ecology are representative at the time of surveying.

Every endeavour has been made to identify the presence of protected species on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

The flora and fauna detailed within this report are those noted during the field survey and from anecdotal evidence. It should not be viewed as a complete list of flora and fauna species that may frequent or exist on site at other times of the year.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on-site.

All Ecology cannot take responsibility where Government, national bodies or industry subsequently modify standards.

All Ecology cannot accept responsibility for data collected from third parties.

Reference to sections or particular paragraphs of this document taken out of context may lead to misrepresentation.

Summary

In August 2026, All Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Land at Hill Farm, Charlton, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 9DJ. The majority of the application site is grassland, with an access drive, partially enclosed by post and wire fence. The local area consists mostly of arable fields, with a large area of woodland to the east.

The proposals of the site are to erect a new shepherds hut, hot tub and wood store with associated access. This will involve removing some areas of grassland.

The habitats on site are common, of low ecological value and easy to replace. The loss of small areas of species-poor grassland does not require any further consideration.

The site and immediate surroundings provide potential habitat for a range of fauna. The following require further consideration/action:

- Bats – No further bat activity surveys deemed necessary but a suitable lighting strategy should be implemented, should any be required.
- Amphibians – There are no ponds on site. OS maps indicated that there is one pond within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 was located on private land and therefore was unable to be subject to Great Crested Newt (GCN) Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment. Due to the nature of the works and the lack of optimal habitats on site, no impacts to Great Crested Newts (GCN) are expected. It is suggested that works could proceed using reasonable avoidance measures and precautionary methods of working based on the potential presence of GCN in the local area but taking into account the sub-optimal nature of the terrestrial habitats on site, partial isolation from local ponds and the low potential for presence.

General suggestions for enhancement have been made e.g. a bird box.

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In August 2026, All Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Land at Hill Farm, Charlton, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 9DJ. The majority of the application site is grassland, with an access drive, partially enclosed by post and wire fence. The local area consists mostly of arable fields, with a large area of woodland to the east.
- 1.2 The proposals of the site are to erect a new shepherds hut, hot tub and wood store with associated access.

Objectives and Aim

- 1.3 The main objectives and aim of the survey were to identify features of ecological interest, undertake a basic search of habitats present for evidence of use, or potential use, by protected species, and to identify any other possible ecological constraints to any further development of the site.

Site Location & Aerial Photograph

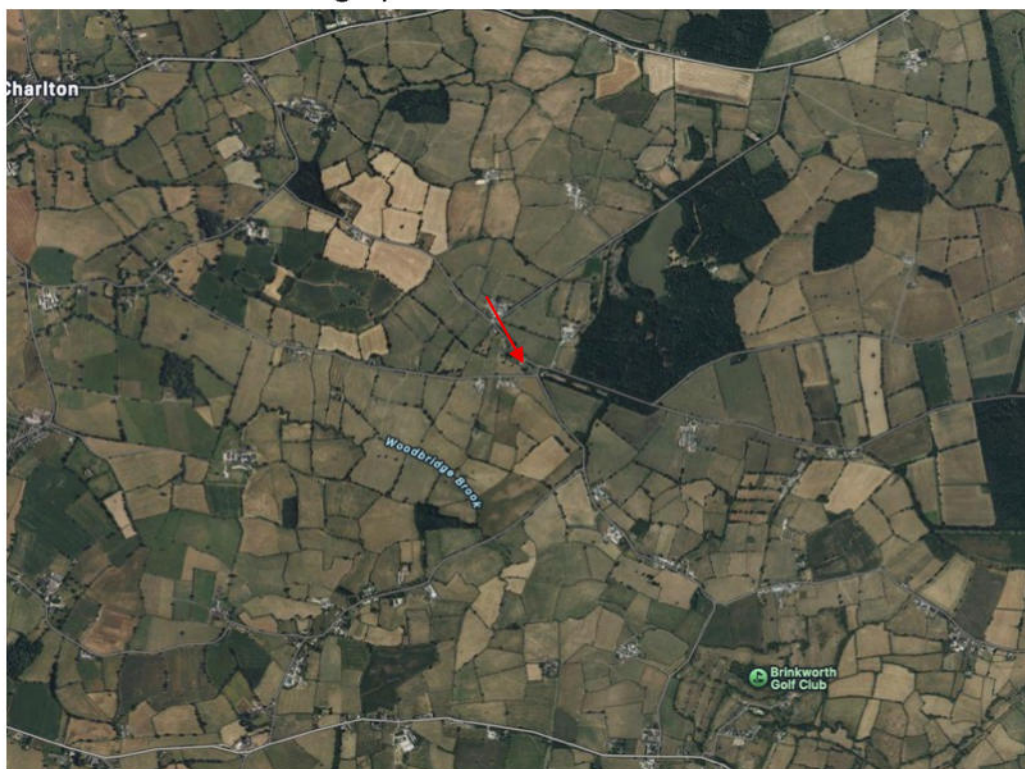


Figure 1: Site location plan.

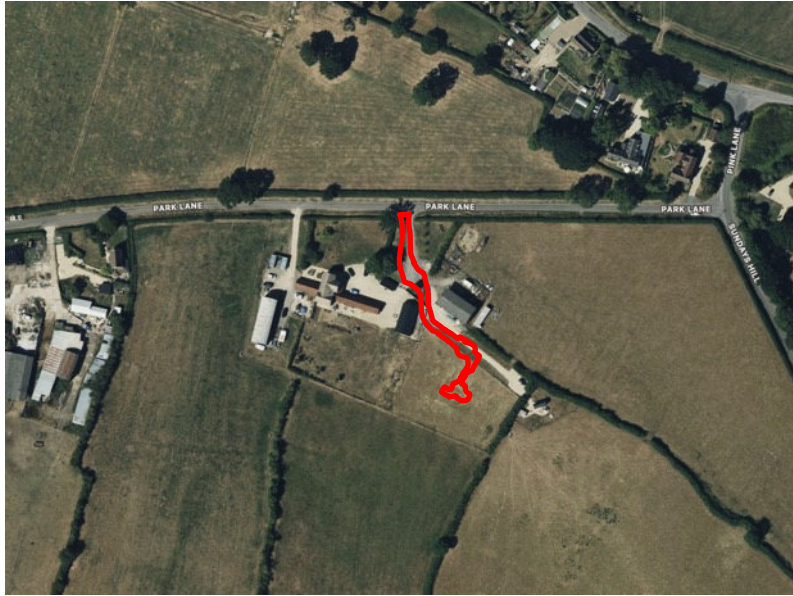


Figure 2: Aerial view of the site.

2.0 Methodology

Personnel

- 2.1 The survey was carried out by Jacob Richardson BSc Hons and the work overseen by James Godbeer BSc Hons MCIEEM, an ecologist with over 19 years' experience working as a consultant. James has extensive experience of managing environmental contracts, and particular experience in surveying, assessment and mitigation for rare and protected species. He has considerable knowledge of the development and planning process including Ecological Impact Assessments, sustainable ecological design and he has completed ecology chapters of Environmental Statements. James holds a number of protected species licences including bats (all species, all counties, Class Licence Registration No. 2015-12313-CLS-CLS), and Great Crested Newts (Class Licence Registration No. 2019-44282-CLS-CLS). He has successfully obtained European Protected Species mitigation licences for a number of bat species including Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Serotine, Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats, for a number of roost types including maternity and hibernation sites.

Desk Study

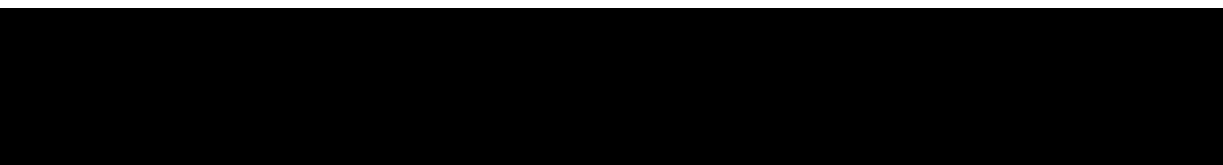
- 2.2 Given the small size and nature of the site, which was mostly an access track and grassland, and the nature of the proposals, a request for data from the local records centre was not deemed necessary.
- 2.3 Online OS maps and aerial photographs were inspected for the presence of ponds in the surrounding area. Additionally, MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside, 2026) was used to establish the distance and direction of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and species records within the search area.

Habitat Survey

- 2.4 The site was visited on the 12th August 2026 and surveyed in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase I Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential that might warrant further study.
- 2.5 In addition to Phase I, UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) methodology was also used to categorise and map the primary habitat types present within the survey area using a standard set of habitat categories, with associated secondary codes/features identified where applicable (UKHab Ltd, 2023). Details of current management and habitat condition have also been recorded where appropriate.

Fauna

- 2.6 There were no buildings or trees on site to assess for bat roosting potential.



- 2.8 Incidental observations of invertebrates and birds were recorded and a search made for any signs of previous nesting.
- 2.9 Any refuges on site such as logs or other debris were lifted and inspected for reptiles and amphibians. There are no ponds on site. OS maps indicated that there is one pond within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 is located on private land and therefore was unable to subject to Great Crested Newt (GCN) Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment.

Valuation of Ecological Features

- 2.10 The valuation process used in this report follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018).
- 2.11 The value of areas of habitat and plant communities has been measured against published criteria where available. Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been searched to identify whether action has been taken to protect all areas of a particular habitat and to identify current factors causing loss and decline of particular habitats. The presence of injurious and legally controlled weeds has also been taken into account.
- 2.12 When assigning a level of value to a species, its distribution and status (including a consideration of trends based on available historic records) has been taken into account. Other factors influencing the value of a species are: legal protection, rarity and Species Action Plans (SAPs). Guidance, where it is available, for the identification of populations of sufficient size for them to be considered of national or international importance has also been taken into account.

Nomenclature

- 2.13 The English name only of flora and fauna species is given in the main text of this report; however, scientific names are used for invertebrates where no English name is available. Vascular plants and charophytes follow the nomenclature of The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) 2007 database (BSBI, 2007) with all other flora and fauna following the Nameserver facility of the National Biodiversity Network Species Dictionary (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nbn/>), which is managed by the Natural History Museum.

Limitations

- 2.14 The site was fully accessible with no limitations to undertaking the survey in accordance with the stated methodology.

3.0 Results

Desk Study

3.1 There are no statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site.

Habitats

3.2 The following table presents a description of the habitats present.

Table 1: Details of habitats present on and bordering the site.

Habitats	Description
g4 – Modified grassland	There were two areas of grassland on site, the grassland within the field and the grassland alongside the access track. The grassland that makes up the field is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass, with frequent Creeping Thistle, Creeping Bent, Common Couch and Yorkshire-fog, with occasional Annual Meadow-grass, Timothy, Cock's-foot and Creeping Thistle, with rare occurrences of Broad-leaved Dock, Common Nettle and False Oat-grass. The grassland alongside the access track is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass, with abundant Creeping Buttercup, frequent occurrences of Yorkshire-fog, Common Couch and Creeping Thistle with occasional occurrences of Curled Dock, Broad-leaved Dock, Cock's-foot, Yarrow and Spear Thistle, and rare occurrences of False Oat-grass, Bristly Ox-tongue, Common Nettle, Daisy and Timothy.
u1c – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	The access drive comprises loose stone.
Fence	The site is partially enclosed by fencing, with a post and barbed wire fence along the west boundary and between the north of the field and the grassland adjacent to the access drive.



1: View of the site looking east.



2: View of the site looking south.



3: View of the site looking west.



4: View of the site looking north.



5: View along the access track looking east.



6: View along the access track looking west.

Fauna

3.3 The following table assesses the potential for other protected species to be present.

Table 2: Protected Species Assessment

Fauna	Description
Bats	Habitats (roosting): No buildings or trees are present on site. Habitats (foraging/commuting): The areas of grassland provide sub-optimal foraging habitat but there will be bat activity associated with the wider site hedges.
Dormice	Habitats: None on-site and offsite boundary hedgerow is limited in extent and unconnected into the wider area making it unlikely that Dormice would be present. Presence/absence: Absent

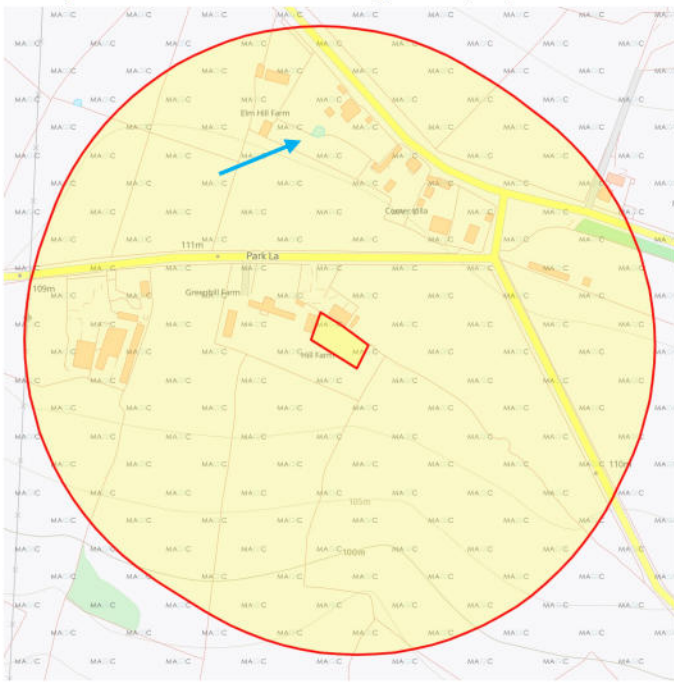
Otters and Water Voles	Records: None. Habitats: No suitable watercourses on site or near to the site. Presence/absence: Absent.
Other Mammals	Habitats: The site is mostly a poor habitat for mammals being mostly short modified grassland with occasional areas of taller swards. Presence/absence: Hedgehogs and common small mammals may be present on occasion but other notable species are likely to be absent.
Birds	Foraging Habitats: The areas grassland only provides a limited resource. Nesting Habitats: The grassland is unsuitable for ground nesting birds. Presence/absence: Several Barn Swallows were recorded flying over the site. Common bird species will be present at times.
Reptiles	Habitats: The site provides small areas of reptile habitat in the longer swards of grassland, which offer limited refuge but denser cover is absent. However, given that the site has limited connectivity to other suitable habitat, the likelihood for reptiles to use the site is negligible. Presence/absence: Absent.
Amphibian	Terrestrial Habitats: Overall, the site is poor for amphibians being entirely grassland, however there are some longer areas of grassland that could offer cover for amphibians. Aquatic Habitats: There are no ponds on site. OS maps indicated that there is one pond within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 is located 160 m to the north on private land and access was not available to carry out a GCN Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment. 

Figure 3: Pond location plan

	Presence/absence: Ponds in the surrounding area are not well connected to the site but there are no significant barriers to dispersal. Given the nature of the habitats on site, GCN will be generally absent the presence of newts crossing the site cannot be entirely ruled out.
Invertebrates	Records: None. Habitats: The habitats on site are common habitats that are mostly poor for invertebrates. Presence/absence: Common assemblages of invertebrates are expected to be present in limited numbers. The potential for notable species to be present is negligible.

4.0 Development Constraints and Recommendations

Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposals of the site are to erect a new shepherds hut, hot tub and wood store with associated access.

Habitats

- 4.2 The grassland on site was identified as modified (improved) grassland. In order to qualify as a NERC Priority Habitat, grassland typically has to be unimproved (good semi-improved grassland can also qualify) and would have to be examples of grasslands such as lowland calcareous grassland or lowland dry acid grassland, habitats not found on site. Any impacts as a result of loss/changes to the grassland on site are considered to be negligible.

Fauna

Bats

- 4.3 There are no suitable roosting habitats on site and the site provides limited potential for foraging and commuting habitat. The proposed works will result in the loss of grassland. The likelihood of any significant impacts to bats is negligible provided a suitable lighting strategy is implemented, should any be required.
- 4.4 Any new lighting, if required, should be designed to ensure impacts to foraging and commuting bats are minimised. General measures include utilising highly directional warm white LED lighting, an example being down spots at 2.5 m high using warm white (2700 K) 8W LED lamps, 550 lumens, 35 degree beam angle. These could be individually activated by PIR sensors on a 1 minute cut off to further reduce their impacts. These will assist in lighting only the areas where lighting is required and minimising light spill either directly or through reflected light. The boundary vegetation must not be subject to any lighting.
- 4.5 The new building, which is a shepherd's hut, does not provide an opportunity to enhance the site for roosting bats. No recommendations are made in this regard.

Birds

- 4.7 The site provides foraging habitat in general. No evidence of nesting was recorded. Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). No removal of nesting habitat is proposed but on-going maintenance should take place outside the nesting

season of March to August. Where this is not possible these habitats would need to be surveyed for nesting birds prior to works taking place.

- 4.8 An area of the grassland would be lost, this is currently a limited resource and any loss would be negligible.
- 4.9 The new Shepherds hut is small but likely to provide an opportunity for further enhancement of the site for nesting birds. The most suitable and proportionate enhancement would be the inclusion of an individual box such as the Schwegler Bird Home 1MR, installed at a height of at least 2 m on the north side of the building.

Amphibians

- 4.10 OS maps indicated that there is one pond within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 is located on private land and access to carry out a HSI Assessment was not possible.
- 4.11 The proposed site plan comprises approximately 0.05 ha of grassland. Using Natural England's Great Crested Newt Rapid Risk Assessment, for any land (not just newt habitat) within 100 – 250 m from any breeding pond, up to 0.5 ha may be lost or damaged before the risk of an offence being committed becomes 'Amber; Offence Likely'. Including the risk of injury or death of newts e.g. those caught in excavations automatically increases the risk to 'Red: Offence Highly Likely' so, although the need for groundworks or excavations is likely to be minimal, in order to remove this risk, works will need to proceed in accordance with the following precautionary methods of working and reasonable avoidance measures.
- 4.12 No exclusion of newts or pre-works survey are proposed. Due to the nature of works, habitats to be impacted on site, and distance to nearby ponds, the risk of harm to Great Crested Newts will be minimal when following precautionary methods of working for amphibians.
- Species of amphibians, including Great Crested Newts could be found on site throughout the construction phase although any potential is minimal. A licensed newt worker will not be required day to day and instead all contractors will be briefed on the identification of amphibians. Any contractors on site would be advised to carry out all work with care and vigilance. Should any Great Crested Newts be found during works, then works would cease and a licensed Ecologist consulted before works continue.
 - Works would be restricted to the designated development area and the impact of works on adjacent habitats limited/avoided by the clear demarcation of the works area.
 - The duration of any necessary groundworks would be kept as short as possible and any trenches left overnight should be covered or provided with ramps to prevent amphibians (and other animals) from becoming trapped.
 - Works will be undertaken during daylight hours only when GCN are less active and are less likely to occupy the area identified for works.
 - Any debris, spoil collected during site clearance would be removed from the site immediately to avoid it becoming used as refuges by amphibians and reptiles. Any building materials would be kept off site or where not possible stored on pallets to prevent them being used as cover

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5.0 Plans

Plan 1 – Proposed site plan

