

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 01/05/2026

Ref: 26/00842/FP
Att: Henry Thomas

Redwings Lodge Hotel, Great North Road, Hinxworth, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 5EX
Two storey extension to provide an additional 51 bedrooms including parking and landscaping

Consultee comments

I have no objection to the principle of development on this site but do have concerns regarding the layout as submitted. North Herts Local Plan policy NE4 requires a 12m buffer to trees and hedgerows but, as can be seen from Arboricultural plan below, there are some large trees off site to the north. The proposed car parking does not provide a sufficient buffer to meet the requirements of NE4.



The February 2026 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) advises bats were recorded in north of site. Stating in 5.3.8 ‘..Linear features such as the hedgerows , tree lines, and woodland provide connective habitat offsite presenting possible commuting pathways to the wider environment to the north and east...’.

As the north of the site will have extensive car parking I am concerned of the impacts from lighting on foraging and commuting bats. If the officer is minded to approve the proposal a lighting strategy must be conditioned.

A statutory Biodiversity Metric has been supplied with the application, this identifies the site baseline as 2.85 habitat units and .68 hedgerow units. I am happy to accept this baseline but I’m not convinced that the proposed habitat unit gains will be achievable.

Individual trees are shown planted at such close proximity there will be no space for the tree to grow to its full, calculated, potential. See blue dots below, individual trees require open conditions to develop features such as a full unconstrained crown and should be planted on at least 5m spacing. Those shown on this plan are far too cramped and are a misrepresentation of what the final biodiversity value of the proposal would be.



This is not to say that the application cannot deliver a biodiversity net gain, more that off site units would be required. The details of which can be provided through the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

Recommendations are made for ecological enhancements and, in conjunction with North Herts Local Plan policy NE4, the following condition is advised;

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features such as the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee bricks in buildings/structures (swift bricks should be used where building heights allow), hedgehog holes in fences and hibernacula has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure development is ecologically sensitive and secures biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the North Herts Local Plan policy NE4.

The potential for disturbance to nocturnal species from lighting on site is raised and a sensitive lighting strategy is advised;

A lighting strategy for biodiversity on the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall;

a) identify those areas/features on site to which bats and other nocturnal species are particularly sensitive and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places, or along important routes used to reach key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging;

and b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

The case officer should note Biodiversity Gain condition wording should be added to the decision notice, the biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition having its own separate statutory basis and is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England. To ensure the applicant is clear about this distinction the biodiversity gain condition should not be included in the list of conditions imposed in the written notice when granting planning permission but should remain separate.

Biodiversity Net Gain

*The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition)” that **development may not begin** unless:*

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and*
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.*

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Herts Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.