

COYNE ENVIRONMENTAL LTD

Trees

Gosmore Road

Hitchin

SG4 7QH



Preliminary Roost Assessment

May 2024

KENNETH COYNE

Dip LA, DA, Dip TP, Cert Ecol. & Cons CMLI. AIEEM

Coyne Environmental

5 Philosophers

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Company

No.

51416453

INTRODUCTION

Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed by Pentangle Design Group, to carry out an ecological study of Trees, Gosmore Road, Hitchin, SG4 7QH, for a planning proposal of replacement dwellings to North Herts District Council (NHDC). It is proposed to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the site to ascertain the ecology of the property, and bats, in particular. Preliminary Roost Assessments are undertaken on development sites in order to assess an area for its suitability for bats to roost, forage and commute. These assessments are typically used to inform a planning application to obtain planning permission.

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), including Schedule 5 for bats. However, since 2007 the effective protection for bats, now comes from Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, which defines "European Protected Species " (EPS). All bats and their habits are protected and must not be harmed in any way. It is an offence to disturb or harm a bat, or damage or obstruct access to a roost.



ODPM circular 06/05 (para 99) is explicit in stating that where there is a reasonable likelihood of the presence of protected species it is essential that the extent that they are affected by the development is established before planning permission is granted, otherwise all material considerations cannot have been addressed in making the decision. Where there is a reasonable likelihood that protected species are affected by development proposals, surveys must be conducted before a decision can be reached (as stated in ODPM circular 06/05). This survey was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, 2016. Within this on the Trigger List No 8- "All proposals in situations where bats are known to have been present "was considered relevant. In NPPF reference to OOPM circular 0612005

I am a qualified Ecologist, Associate of the Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management with over 35 years' experience in the environmental field. This includes

being a license bat worker (Bat License 2015-15943-CLS-CLS). The PRA Survey was carried out on the 23rd April 2024. This was conducted in the day time, (8C) variable conditions, medium winds, dry but cloudy.

AREA DESIGNATIONS

Management and protection of biodiversity within the UK planning system is set out through European and UK legislation. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) is the main protection for the environment. Wildlife conservation is set out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). There is also legislation for specific species, Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Protection of Badgers Act 1992, EU Habitats and Birds Directive and more general guidance, Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, which defines "European Protected Species" (EPS). EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020 is also noted. Biodiversity -Code of Practice for Development has also been used in this study.



The Hertfordshire Biodiversity Partnership has developed the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the county as A 50-year Vision for wildlife and natural habitats of Hertfordshire along with the Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan 2010. There is also legislation for specific species, Protection of Badgers Act 1992, EU Habitats and Birds Directive and more general guidance, EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020. These all are aimed at ensuring the environment of Hertfordshire and its wildlife is adequately protected. This study and report have also taken into account BS 42020 (2013) Biodiversity -Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

The NHDC has various policies to protect the environment, particularly Policy 14 Nature Conservation and various Green Space strategies. There are no National Nature Reserves (NNR) within the study area. The nearest water course is the River Hiz (chalk stream) with Priory Fields country park to the west and the nearest HMWT Nature Reserve is Purwell Ninesprings, east of the search area.

LOCATION

Hitchin (named after the Hicce people) is a market town in north Hertfordshire, dating from at least the 7th century. It lies in the valley of the River Hiz at the north-eastern

end of the Chiltern Hills, Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB) . The population at the 2021 census was 35,220.

Hitchin grew around a market place and the adjoining parish church of St Mary (once a Minster).. Hitchin Priory,(Listed Building Grade 1) a former Carmelite friary date back to 1317. Following the Dissolution, it was partially rebuilt into a large country house. In 1770 this was re-modelled in the Palladian style by the Deime-Radcliffe family who only sold the estate in 1965. They also created the parkland (19 acres), by Nathaniel Richmond, now a private hotel.

The town is near the ancient Ichnield Way and the Hicca Way follows the line that Danes and the English used as trading routes. Hitchins's economy was historically agriculture, primarily arable with sheep farming. The wool trade became a major industry. Lavender has long been grown in the fields around the town with lavender distilleries and has recently been revived.

SITE

The site is a period detached property in the centre of a large garden. It is one of several similar residences on the main road to Gosmore. It would appear to be generally in good condition. This is on the southern outskirts of the town and part of a residential area. On the west side of the road is Priory Fields, a country park, leading out into the countryside. The period house with detached garage is white rendered and tiled roofs with the grounds, mainly lawns and trees on the boundary. On an initially inspection, the site would appear to have limited ecology.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT (PRA)

It is proposed to undertaken a PRA to ascertain what the current ecology on site is, particularly in relation to bats. Bats have been recorded in the area but not on this site. The building was inspected first, starting with the roof space for evidence of bats. The loft has been partly converted to bedrooms and storage areas with access stair and fully lighted. This is a traditional wooden roof structure with no insulation in the trusses but boarded over the rafter for access. Only a small portion of the original rood is still a loft space. All would appear to be in reasonable condition.



An assessment of the available loft was conducted using visual methods, a powerful (1000 lumen) torch and bat detector (Echo Metre Touch 2 /Notepad) as detailed in the Bat Conservation Trusts Bat Surveys, Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd. edition 2016. The internal roof spaces were thoroughly examined as were the whole of the

external parts of the premises. Inspection of the rafters, boarding and all small spaces were thoroughly investigated. No bats were found on the inspection. Evidence for previous bat activity was investigated. No bat droppings on any of the surfaces or around stored boxes and other items or evidence of discarded meals (insect wings) was found. Potential entry points, were inspected but no urine stains or entry scratching was found. Cobwebs (with no droppings in any of them) were noted as being undisturbed, indicating that no animal activity had recently occurred. The conclusion of the internal loft space inspection was that no evidence of a bat roost has been found

External areas of the house and grounds were surveyed next. Inspection of all the front and back windowsills, door frames and opening and similar areas were reviewed. No evidence of bat droppings on any of these or discarded meal was found. Using binoculars, any potential cracks or other openings was observed for potential urine stains or entry scratching but nothing was found. The mature trees on site, in the garden, have no ivy growing on any of them (potential roost sites). No suitable holes (woodpecker) cracks or similar on the tree trunks, as potential roosting sites was found.

The PRA survey and assessment of the site and the building, has now been completed. The loft of the existing house has been thoroughly inspected for bats along with the external areas of the grounds. No bats or evidence of them was found. This was equally the same with the grounds. The site therefore has a low potential as a bat roost and no further ecological studies are required.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The Environment Act 2021 has a mandatory require for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on developments of a minimum of 10%. Within this scheme it is proposed that the BNG will be undertaken as part of this study to assist the planning application. Suitable mitigation or enhancement required to meet the Statutory Net Gain could then be incorporated into the ecological and landscape design proposals.

This can include native species of planting, selected wild flora mixes and habitat creation in the form of bat and bird boxes and other features for fauna. Areas of wildflower meadow and rain gardens (damp areas) could form part of the proposals along with SuDS design.

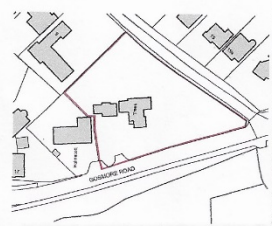
CONCLUSION

Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed to carry out a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of Trees, Gosmore Road, Hitchin, SG4 7QH. The site survey and subsequent desk top study of the site indicates that this is not in an area of high risk for any specific species or sensitive habitats. The study assessment has concluded that the site only has a **low potential** for bats and a **negative potential** as a hibernation roost.

Therefore, in my professional opinion I assess that the proposal of a new dwelling on the site will have minimal impact on the overall ecology of the area and bats (EPS) in particular. I conclude that, no further environmental studies are required and that the proposal can be determined on this basis.

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NOTES



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PLANNING

PENTANGLE

DESIGN GROUP

SUITE 1, 21 BANCROFT HITCHIN HERTS SG5 1JW

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JOB TITLE

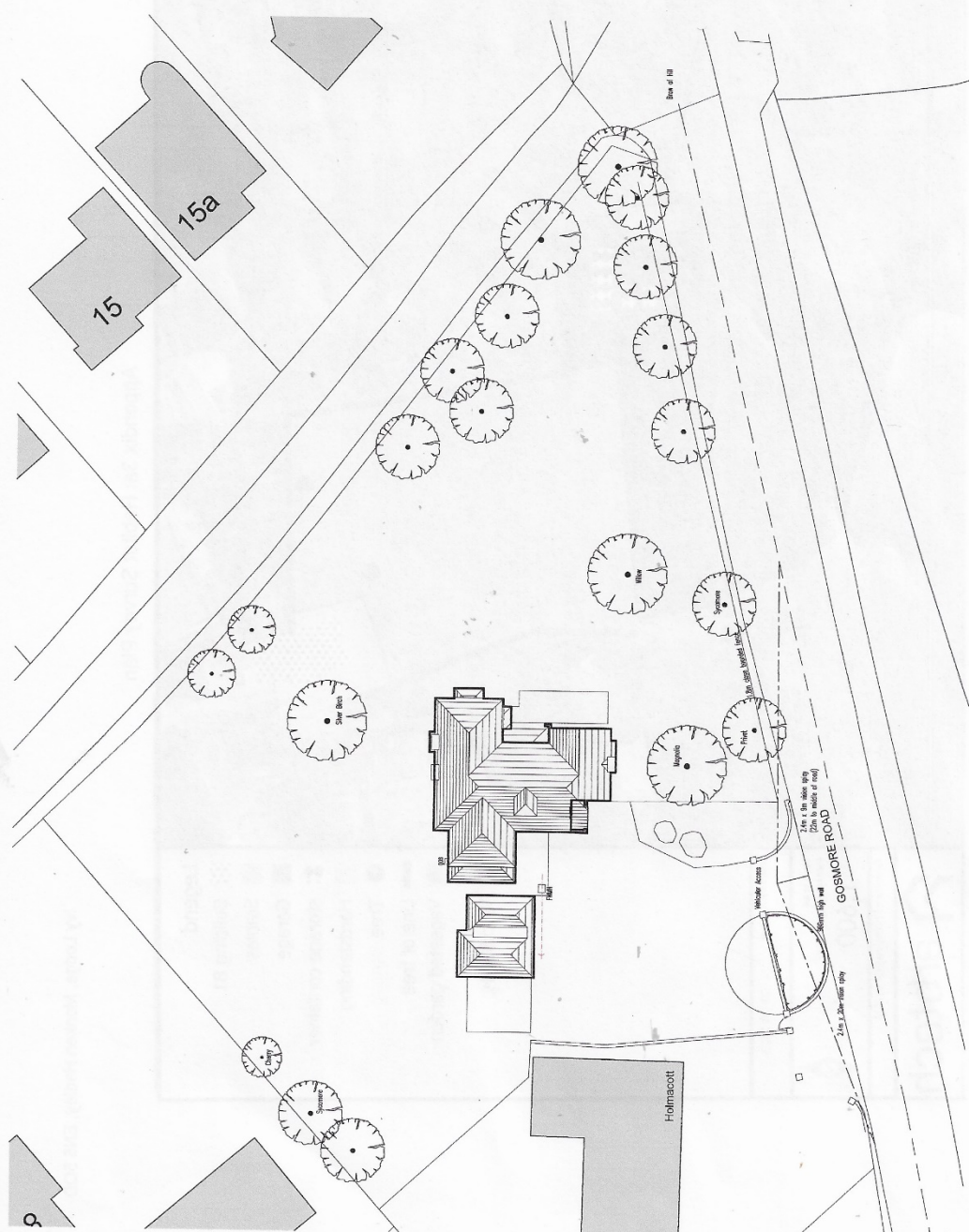
Proposed Extensions and Alterations to
"Trees" Gosmore Road, Hitchin

DRAWING TITLE

Location Plan and Site Plan as Existing

SCALE	DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION
1:250 1:1250	01	A
DATE	REVISED	
Oct '20		
BY	A2	
3615		

ARCHITECTS & INTERIOR DESIGNERS



Site Plan As Existing



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- Accommodation Schedule**
1. 4 Bedroom House, Area: 239 m² 2570 sq ft
 2. 4 Bedroom House, Area: 235 m² 2530 sq ft
 3. 4 Bedroom House, Area: 246 m² 2640 sq ft
- (Excludes garage)

PRELIMINARY
PENTANGLE
 DESIGN GROUP
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 www.pentangle.co.uk
 17/05/2016
 Trees' Gosmore Road, Hitchin

Feasibility Study

SCALE: 1:2000
 DATE: 17/05/2016
 REVISED:
 BY: Mr J. 17
 CHECKED: A2
 JOB NUMBER: 3615
 ARCHITECTS & INTERIOR DESIGNERS



Site Plan As Proposed
 1:200 scale