

COYNE ENVIRONMENTAL LTD

**19 Walnut Tree Road
Pirton
SG5 3PX**



Ecological Assessment

October 2025

**Kenneth Coyne Dip LA, DA, Dip TP, Cert. Ecol. & Cons. (Dist.) CMLI
Coyne Environmental Ltd
5 Philosophers Gate
Ashwell
SG7 5DL
01462 743723**

kcoyne@coyneenvironmental.co.uk

Company Number: 51414653

INTRODUCTION

Coyne Environmental Ltd have been instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of 19 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, SG5 3PX. This is to establish the potential presence or absence of protected features of ecological significance. The client is planning to construct new residential properties on the land. A planning application is being prepared for North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). It is proposed to undertake a PEA of the site.

From the survey and analysis of the ecological assessment, it will be possible to review the proposals, to ascertain what measures are needed to achieve a satisfactory result for the environment. The PEA will enable the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to consider the impact of the proposal on any sensitive ecology. It can then discharge its legal obligations under the "Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2018) and any Outline Mitigation and Compensation Strategy" if required.

I am a qualified Ecologist with over 40 years' experience in the environmental field. This includes being a licenced bat worker (Bat Licence 2015-15943-CLS-CLS). The PEA survey was undertaken on the 01.09. 25 in good weather conditions 16°C, 90% cloud cover, dry.



LOCATION

Pirton (pop 1452-20210) is a village in north Hertfordshire ,5 km north-west of Hitchin, and adjoining the border with Bedfordshire. The village is recorded in Domesday within the Hundred of Hitchin. as Peritone, 'homestead of pears'. St Mary parish church 12thC was rebuilt in 1877. It stands within the bailey of a former castle, Toot Hill mound , a 12C motte and bailey castle but on possible Saxon origins. It is an Ancient Monument (AM).

Pirton Grange, a moated Elizabethan House with timber framed gate house was remodelled in the 18thC. Hammonds Farm and Rectory Farm, with its tithe barn, are also Elizabethan. The western part of the parish is part of the Chiltern Hills, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) .The Icknield Way Path passes through the village on its 180 km journey from Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire to Knettishall

Heath in Suffolk. This is a multi-user route for walkers, horse riders and off-road cyclists also passes through the village.

SITE

The long straight ditch to the south of the motte and bailey earthworks, linking Walnut Tree Road with Bury End, and is the line of a mediaeval road or holloway. Between this sunken road and Walnut Tree Road are extensive earthworks, indicating the former presence of houses, outbuildings, and property boundaries. These, together with the evidence of old maps, show that this part of the village has been abandoned in recent centuries.



The village earthworks continue to the south of Walnut Tree Farm and are very regular in plan. It is probable that the castle and this part of the village were planned and constructed the same time in the 12thC. There are two permanent ponds on the Bury, the one near Walnut Tree Road, called Larkins Pond and the other is Bindman's Pond

The site is in the south end of this rural village. A large plot with a modern house, possibly on a former rectory site, on the corner with Cotman End. This leads to the Pirton Sports & Sical Club with a new clubhouse current being built. Opposite the site is the grounds leading up to Pirton Castle. Within the garden of mainly amenity lawns, mature trees and a large summerhouse is the bed of a stream, currently dry, running through the centre of the plot.

AREA DESIGNATION

Management and protection of biodiversity within the UK planning system is set out through European and UK legislation. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (WCA) is the main protection for wildlife. There is also legislation for specific species, Protection of Badgers Act 1992, EU Habitats and Birds Strategy 2011-2020. Bats are protected under Schedule 5 of WCA. However, since 2007 the effective protection for bats now comes under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, which defines "European Protected Species " (EPS).

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.

Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) draft as a potential area for restoring Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) populations.

The site is not in the Green Belt (GB), and but on the edge of the Chilterns SSSI. The nearest Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) nature reserve is outside the search area. The nearest Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is Stotfold Mill Meadows. There are no National Nature Reserves (NNR), RAMSAR sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within the search area.

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

A full Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not deemed necessary as this is a site which would appear to have only limited natural features. So, this study is an Ecological Note Assessment as a Walkover Survey of the ecology of the site. However, if the survey identifies any wildlife of significance, measures will be taken as set out in the JNCC guidance Handbook of Phase 1 Habitat Surveys (2010) and CIEEM Guidelines (2017).

The house is at the front of the site and is a modern two storey dwelling with a double garage. This is in white rendering, wooden windows and doors with clay pitch tiled roofs. There is a single storey conservatory on the back of the property.



The building was first inspected for bats (European Protected Species) starting with the loft. This has been converted to additional residential use. So, there is no conventional loft space, and **no** evidence of bats was found. External areas of the building 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 or discarded meals, on any of these was found.

The double garage was inspected, a single storey brick structure a tiles roof. This is an open wooden beam and truss structure with no loft space. An inspection of the area found no evidence of bat droppings, discarded meals or entry point stains etc. It is assessed to have **no** bat roosting potential.

The vegetation, on site was next inspected starting with the trees. Most of these are non-native and inspection of holes and fissures, with binoculars, found no evidence of urine stains or entry scratches on any of these. The rest of the vegetation is ornamental, mostly evergreen planting and not suitable as a bat habitat, with nothing found. In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trusts (BCT) Bat Surveys, Good Practice Guidelines, 4th. edition 2023, the site is assessed to have limited habitats for bats and **no** potential as roost sites.

The garden of the property is a manged landscape of mown lawns with limited value for wildlife. The vegetation will probably be used by birds for foraging and nesting sites. On inspection, using binoculars, no active nests or evidence of nest building was found, and it is now the end of the general breeding season. Birds seen on the site included: Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*). The site is assessed to have a medium potential for avifauna.



There are few opportunities for other wildlife. No runs, holes, excavations were observed in the grounds, as a site being a transit to other habitats. No droppings (rabbit) burrows (voles, shrews) or evidence of setts (badger) was noted. The bed of the stream is dry. So, there is no opportunity for Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) (EPS) and other reptiles are not present. The garden has potential for hedgehogs (Priority Species), but none were found. The site is assessed as only a limited habitat for wildlife in general.

ECOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The site is primarily a residential garden, of modified grassland UKHab 2.01 code: g4 of mainly *Poa spp* and *Festuca spp* grasses with a few weeds, Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*) in places. Within this are large mature trees including birch (*Betula pendula*) cherry (*Prunus spp*) hawthorn with non-native ornamental trees including evergreen conifers. Trees extend around the edge of the site, with islands of mixed ornamental shrubs and herbaceous perennials, across the lawns

Along the boundary of the property and the stream bed, are rougher areas of vegetation UKHab h2NE3 with ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) privet (*Ligustrum ssp.*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). This has a limited understorey UKHab 2.01 code g3 with nettles (*Urtica dioica*) with ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) and cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

Mixed hedges UKHab h2a of mainly conifers and mixed beds of ornamental shrubs and herbaceous perennials. These are manged to a high horticultural standard, good for butterflies, bees and other invertebrates. There are small areas of understorey where the hedge is all grass, here a limited ground flora consists of nettle, cleavers (*Galium aparine*), dandelion and common nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*).

It has been noted that no bird nesting was observed on the survey. Any proposed clearance of existing vegetation should not be carried out in the breeding season (March-August). If emergency operations are necessary, they must not be undertaken until an ecologist has undertaken a bird nest transit inspection. Any active nest that are found must be zoned off by protective fencing and can only be continued when fledglings have departed from the nest, confirmed by the appointed ecologist.

No evidence of mammals was observed on the survey. Trees were inspected for any holes (woodpecker), fissures, urine stains, signs of faeces, entry scratches but none were observed. There were no ponds on the site and the stream crossing the centre of the Garen is not a potential habitat for amphibian species and protected Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*), GCN. The GCN Suitability Index assessment was therefore not required. The extensive areas of ornamental herbaceous beds are a good habitat for invertebrates and Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) were noted. In the longer grass Common Field Grasshoppers (*Chorthippus brunneus*) were numerous.

This ecological assessment has shown that the site has some environmental value. Where possible, as many of the trees and hedges should be retained. Care should also be exercised when removing any garden waste which may harbour Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) a Priority Species and connectivity should be maintained with holes led the any boundary fences to allow movement between habitats.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The Environment Act 2021 has a mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on developments of a minimum of 10%. Within this scheme it is proposed that the BNG should be undertaken as part of this proposal. A separate BNG Metric will be undertaken from the assessment in this Report.

The results from this exercise will provide suitable mitigation or enhancement required to meet the Statutory Net Gain in the Environment Act 2021. These can form any required Landscape Design scheme as a Reserved Matter.

CONCLUSION

Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed to undertake an ecological assessment of 19 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, SG5 3PX. to establish the potential presence or absence of protected ecology of significance. This is in preparation of a planning application to North Herts District Council, and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken. This has found no ecology or habitats of importance, including bats (EPS)

In my professional opinion it is assessed that this survey and Report should satisfy the LPA for information on ecology. Following the concluding from the BNG metric no further environmental studies are required to determine the Applications when submitted.

REFERENCES

Existing Site Map
Proposal Map
Habitat Map

[illegible]

PRE-APP

PENTAGILT

[illegible]Proposed Residential Development
19 Walnut Tree Road, Plover, Michigan

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[illegible]

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DO NOT SCALE



Notes
 Plan to be used in conjunction with the design drawings and other related landscape drawings.
 The information on this plan is intended for general reference only.
 The information on this plan is not intended to be used as a basis for any other design or construction work.
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KEY

- Red line
- Boundary
- Building
- Hard Surface
- Grass
- Trees
- Mixed Shrubbed
- Hedge
- Stream (dry)

COTNE ENVIRONMENTAL

19 Walnut Tree Dr
 Dublin
 98018-1111

COTNE ENVIRONMENTAL
 19 Walnut Tree Dr
 Dublin, WA 98018-1111

Scale: 1" = 20' Date: 8/2/08