

Hertfordshire LEADS (Ecology)
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Application:

26/00021/FP

Erection of one pair of semi-detached dwellings and one detached dwelling to include cycle stores, hard and soft landscaping and parking following demolition of the existing commercial buildings. Alterations to existing vehicular access.

1 And 3 Priory Lane Little Wymondley
Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7HE

Documents:

- Existing Site Plan, Plans & Elevations (Sept 2025)
- Proposed Site Plan, Plan & Elevations (Sept 2025)
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report (Oct 2025)
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Sept 2025)
- Preliminary Roost Assessment Report (Nov 2025)

Consultancy:

Coyne Environmental Ltd

Summary of Advice:

Application can be determined with
Conditions and Informatives listed

Pre-determination

- Protected species – No further surveys required.
- BNG – Sufficient minimum information for determination - but see comments.

Determination

- BNG - Enhancements are not significant.

Post- Determination

- BNG – No additional units required.

Comments and recommended Conditions and Informatives:

Protected species

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.

Bats: A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was carried out on the 6th August 2025 by a suitably qualified person. The building proposed for demolition has no loft space, no external evidence of bats was found during the survey, and the building was assessed to have negligible potential as a roost site. Furthermore, the Biodiversity Net Gain Report (Oct 2025) states that the existing trees onsite will be retained. Therefore, no further surveys are required with regard to bats.

Other protected species: Biodiversity Net Gain Report (Oct 2025) concludes that this site does not contain evidence of European Protected Species (EPS), and the PRA report assesses the site has having low value for wildlife in general. Looking at imagery of the site and our records of protected species, I see no reason to doubt this conclusion.

In conclusion, I would not consider the proposed works to have any impact on protected species, and no further surveys are required.

BNG – Pre-determination

A base line habitat map and statutory metric sufficient meet the minimum requirements for BNG predetermination have been submitted, although the area of Ruderal/Ephemeral habitat shown in the habitat base line and described in the PRA as an area of bare ground with a few emergent weeds, is labelled as an area of modified grassland in the base line habitat map. Whilst this clearly reflects an inaccuracy, it makes no material difference to the biodiversity score.

The metric calculation tool (Mandatory Metric, completed 4th September 2025) shows base line values of 0.26 Habitat Units and 0 Hedgerow units. I have no reason to doubt these values.

LNRS & the base line: The submitted metric gives a value of low strategic significance to elements of the base line. This is in line with government guidance regarding the use of the LNRS, as whilst the site is included in the mapping of the Nightingale and Grassland 3 ('Create more good quality neutral grassland') actions, the proposed on-site habitat creation does not align with these actions.

BNG – Determination

On site BNG is not significant: Non-Significant on site BNG: The proposed BNG is made up of habitats that cannot be secured by the planning process. As a result, I advise that the On-Site enhancements should be considered non-significant enhancements.

This application is subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain. A baseline habitat map and statutory metric have been submitted, and an overall net gain greater than 10% which meets the trading rules has been achieved onsite. Whilst the biodiversity gain condition is a post determination matter, the present information allows the LPA reasonable confidence that the general Biodiversity Condition will be discharged.

BNG – Post-determination

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.

This application will be subject to the Biodiversity Gain Condition, whereby a Biodiversity Gain Plan will be submitted as part of this Condition. The biodiversity gain plan should be prepared in accordance with the approved biodiversity metric, and we advise that the government template for the gain plan is used.

In order the Biodiversity Gain Plan to be discharged it should be submitted with the following minimum information either within the body of the plan or as supporting information:

- completed metric tool calculation
- pre-development and post-development plans (showing the location of on-site habitat, the direction of north and drawn to an identified scale)
- biodiversity net gain register reference numbers if they're using off-site units

I trust these comments are of assistance and kind regards.

Simon Richards

Senior Ecologist, Hertfordshire LEADS

Isabelle Hasell

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