

Coyne Environmental Ltd

**THE OLD COACH HOUSE,
RADWELL,
SG7 5ES**



Ecological Assessment

May 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed by the Pentangle Design Group to carry out an ecological assessment of The Old Coach House, Radwell ,SG7 5ES for a planning application to build a new house within the rear garden for North Herts District Council (NHDC) .A tree survey has already been carried out by Harrison Arboriculture, and a Ecological Assessment , including for bats (European Protected Species) will be undertaken. From the analysis of this study, it will be possible to review the ecology of the site, to ascertain what measures may be needed to achieve a satisfactory environmental result for the site.

NHDC have the following comments:

The site could be home to protected species or habitats, i.e. bats, and therefore an ecological survey should be undertaken and submitted with an application, including mitigation.

The LPA may need a Preliminary Roost Assessment bat survey carried out before the application can be determined, which is likely to depend on the results of the ecological survey. If the PRA finds such interest, it may be necessary to undertake further surveys to determine the level of use.

These further surveys can usually only be completed during bat activity season during late Spring and all of Summer to September. The LPA is likely to refuse an application if not submitted with an appropriate bat survey and may not keep it on 'hold' until a survey can be carried out.

Species enhancement measures referred to in the last paragraph should also be included

This study should enable NHDC to consider the impact of the proposal on the environment. And bats. 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.



Kenneth Coyne is a qualified ecologist, with over 40 years' experience in the environmental field. This includes being a license bat worker (Bat License 2015-15943-CLS-CLS). The PEA

survey was carried out on the 21st May 2025 by senior ecologist Colin Carpenter. This was conducted in the daytime, (19C) variable conditions, medium winds, dry but cloudy.

LOCATION

Radwell is a very small, isolated hamlet adjacent to the A1 in the Green Belt (GB) and surrounded by extensive countryside of hedges, fields and copses. The settlement is located to the north of Letchworth Garden City, southeast of Stotfold and to the northwest of Baldock. The River Ivel flows through the village, where there is a campsite.

SITE

The site is a large 17th Century Coach House standing close to Radwell Manor and the River Ivel but is not a Listed Building (LB). The property consists of a small front garden and a much larger 1-acre rear garden, full of large notable trees.

A tree survey has been undertaken by Harrison Arboriculture, which has been used in this study. The new development may have a significant effect on the adjacent tree roots, and a Root Protection Area (RPA) should be considered. Access to the site is either through the house itself or down a narrow alleyway alongside the house.



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) is the main protection for wildlife, including bats. 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. This study and report have also considered BS 42020 (2013) Biodiversity -Code of practice for planning and development.

North Hertfordshire is a fast-growing region within the designated area, and GB. Radwell is surrounded by Letchworth Garden City and other adjacent settlements. The site is not in a Conservation Area (CA) and there are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) on any of the trees in the rear garden being studied, except a large, pollarded lime tree in the front garden. There are no National Nature Reserves (NNR) or RAMAS sites in the study area. These are all aimed at ensuring the environment of the county and its wildlife is adequately protected

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

As the site would appear to have only average ecology a Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not required for this assessment. A Walkover Ecological Survey has therefore been carried out. However, if this identifies any wildlife of significance, measures will be taken as set out in the JNCC guidance Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys (2010) and CIEEM Guidelines (2017).

The Old Coach House has a large patio at the rear of the house, with steps leading up to a graded sloping lawn which stretches up to the rear of the garden. There are extensive areas of ornamental planting and boundary hedges and at least 12 large mature lime (*Tilia spp.*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), cedar (*Cedrus spp*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*) trees. This area would appear to have only medium ecological potential for most wildlife, moderate potential for birds but high suitability for bats, in the trees.

As the proposed development may affect the existing trees in the rear garden, an assessment for bats, European Protected Species (EPS) has been carried out. Bats may well be using the site for foraging and commuting to and from other habitats, and bat roosts may be present in some of the older trees on site. The house was inspected first and would appear to be in good general condition. Windowsills, doorways and other openings were looked at for any droppings, urine stains and signs of any potential entry points (scratchings) or meals (insect wings) but nothing was found. Using binoculars, the roof was studied for any broken, loose tiles and signs of entry with nothing found. Trees were inspected using binoculars, in the garden for evidence of urine stains and entry/exist scratch marks in potential fissure and holes (woodpecker) on tree trunks. No evidence of bats was found. In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines the site is assessed as of **medium** potential for bat roosts



Within the semi woodland areas are large stack of logs and firewood, which would be ideal habitat for a wide range of small mammals, insectivores such as hedgehogs (Priority Species) and invertebrates. The site was also inspected for bird nesting, using binoculars. At least 2 active nests were found among the shrubberies, one of a Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and the other of a Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). Other birds noted were Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) and Swift (*Apus apus*) seen flying overhead on the survey.

Some mammal trails were noticed through the vegetation, and may have been hedgehog, badger or fox. Within the semi woodland areas are large stacks of logs and firewood, which would be ideal habitat for a wide range of small mammals, insectivores such as hedgehogs and invertebrates. Some droppings were observed on the survey by the log piles, for evidence of animals, probably small mammals such as Wood Mouse, and Bank Vole, but no evidence of reptiles and amphibians like Great Crested

Newt (EPS). The site is therefore assessed as a habitat of **medium importance** for mammals, reptiles and amphibian ecology

ECOLOGICAL REVIEW

Most of the proposed development site would occupy the large lawn at the far end in the rear garden. The mature trees are significant, and consist of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*), Yew, (*Taxus baccata*) and Atlantic Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*). The site is assessed of having medium ecological importance, where the large trees and semi woodland environment is an important habitat. The site is therefore classed as of **medium** ecological significance. No comprehensive Bat Activity Survey (BAS) has been carried out yet but is recommended that this is carried out on this property as a matter of course.



The site contains a variety of native plants, herbs and coarse grasses. These include:

Abundant

Aegopodium podagraria (Ground Elder)
Agropyron repens (Couch Grass)
Agrostis stolonifera (Creeping Bent)
Allaria petiolate (Hedge Garlic)
Convolvulus arvensis (Field bindweed)
Euonymus europaeus (Spindle)
Festuca rubra commutate (Chewings Fescue)
Geranium robertianum (Herb Robert)
Hedera helix (Ivy)
Poa pratensis (Smooth Meadow Grass)
Urtica dioica (Stinging Nettle)

Frequent

Anthriscus sylvestris (Cow Parsley)
Bellis perennis (Daisy) in lawn mainly
Dactylis glomerata (Cocksfoot)
Pastinaca sativa (Wild parsnip)
Sambucus nigra (Elder)
Taraxacum officinale (Dandelion)

Occasional

Arum maculatum (Wild Arum)
Bromus ramosus (Greater hairy Brome)
Deschampsia caespitosa (Tufted Hair Grass)

Linerea purpurea (Purple Toadflax)
Myosotis arvensis (Field Forget-me-not)

Bird Species seen and heard on site

Robin
Blackbird
Song Thrush
Blackcap
Chiff Chaff
Wren
Green parakeet
Coal Tit
Blue Tit
Swallow
Swift

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

The Environment Act 2021 has a mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on most developments of a minimum of 10%. However, there are certain exemptions including self-build development, which is being proposed in this Application. There will however be a requirement for environmental enhancements, such as bird and bat boxes. These will be considered in the detailed design.

CONCLUSION

Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed to carry out an ecological study of the property at The Old Coach House, Radwell SG7 5ES for a proposal to develop the site, adjacent to the main house, for a new dwelling in the rear garden. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) review has been undertaken. The site survey and subsequent desk top study indicates that this is not in an area of high risk for any specific species or sensitive habitats but may well have a significant effect on the adjacent trees.

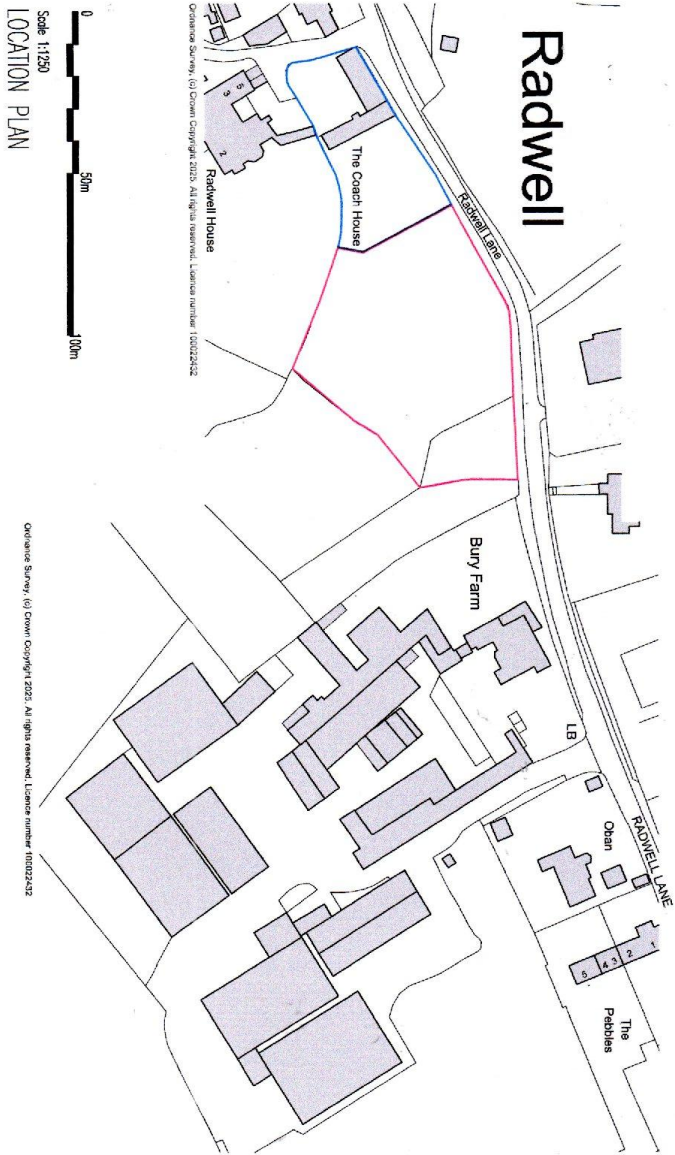
The study assessment has concluded that the site has **medium potential** as a bat roost and a **medium potential** for wildlife in general. The site ecology has **not changed prior** to this assessment and **no irreplaceable habitats** will be affected by this proposal. On this assessment it is recommended that a transit dusk **Bat Activity Survey (BAS)** be undertaken on the trees, and this can only be undertaken between May and September.

Given the number of trees on the site, a **Tree Protection Plan (TPP)** including Root Protection Areas (RPA) be prepared with a Sensitive Lighting Strategy (SLS) for the effects on bats, once the results of the BAS are known.

Therefore, in my professional opinion I assess that the proposal to develop the site should overall have minimal impact on ecology, once the results of the above additional studies have been produced and any necessary mitigation undertaken. I conclude that no further environmental surveys will be required, and the Application can be determined by North Herts District Council on this basis,

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NOTES



PRE-APPLICATION

DETAILED

DESIGN GROUP

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