

COYNE ENVIRONMENTAL LTD

Oxleaze Business Park

Greenhill

Royal Wootton Bassett

SN4 8EH



ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

June 2024

KENNETH COYNE
Dip LA, DA, Dip TP, Cert Ecol. & Cons CMLI. AIEEM
Coyne Environmental
5 Philosophers Gate
Ashwell
Herts.
SG7 5DL
01462 743723

Company No 51414653

INTRODUCTION

Offgrid Architecture has instructed Coyne Environmental Ltd to carry out an Ecological Assessment of Oxleaze Business Park, Greenhill, Wootton Bassett, SN4 8EH to establish the potential presence or absence of protected ecological features of significance. It is proposed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) survey and report on the findings. It is proposed to convert one of the existing industrial units into new uses, for which planning permission will be required.

The completed PEA will enable the local planning authority (LPA) to consider the impact of the proposal on wildlife. The authority 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, Associate of the Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management with over 35 years' experience in the environmental field. This includes being a licence bat worker (Bat Licence 2015-15943-CLS-CLS). The PEA survey was carried out on the 18th June 2024. This was conducted in the day time, (19 c) variable conditions, light winds, dry.

LOCATION

Wiltshire is a rural county of mainly chalk downland, with sheep, one of the main land uses. The two major rivers, both called Avon have influenced the topography of the land, Salisbury Plain being a prominent feature, much of it used for military exercises by the British Army. Stonehenge is a testimony to the ancient history of the land.

Royal Wootton Bassett, is a market town (pop. 11,700 -2011) and from 1447-1832 was a "rotten borough", electing two members of parliament. Appearing in Domesday its name derives from its location in Braydon Forest. In 2011 the town was granted royal patronage by Queen Elizabeth 11 for services in organising funeral processions for returning fallen military hero`s.

SITE

The hamlet of Greenhill is a strung-out ribbon of houses and farms in a rural landscape of arable crops and woodlands (remnants of the ancient royal hunting Forest of Braydon) with Ravensroost Wood a Nature Reserve. Oxleaze Business Park is at the top of the access road (no through road) and now used by the current owner as an office, workshops, stables and grazing for ponies, as well as a programme to turning some of the land to a more natural habitat for wildlife.

The existing industrial unit is currently used for storage with adjacent buildings. The front of the site is mainly for parking. At the rear of the buildings is further informal storage, old machinery and an agricultural plant . An untidy working yard on hard surfacing.



Adjacent to this is a fenced area, with a concrete ramp on the boundary (formally used to clear /maintain buses) which is also part of the application site. This was also used for informal parking and storage, no longer needed. Beyond the boundary is a woodland belt (Matthews Copse) leading out to Oxleaze Farm, in the same ownership as the application site.

It is thus an industrial business in a rural setting. Most of the site is occupied by commercial buildings, the access road and informal hardstanding's for vehicle movement. Vegetation is limited to the boundaries, of limited ecological value, mainly elder (*Sambucus nigra*) hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) hedges, with individual trees oak (*Quercus robur*) ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) lime (*Tilia spp.*) and non-native conifers. It would appear to be a site of minimal ecological value.

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 wildlife. There is also legislation for specific species, Protection of Badgers Act 1992, Habitat Regulations 1994 Schedule 2 (European Protected Species), EU Habitats and Birds Directive and more general guidance, EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020. These all are aimed at ensuring the environment of Wiltshire 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.

Wiltshire County Council has a number of policies in its Local Plan (LP) 2021 including a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2008 with Landscape Biodiversity Areas and has a Local Nature Partnership (Link2Nature). Local initiatives include a National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP) and the Avon is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Wiltshire Council is now a Unitary Authority which covers Royal Wootton Bassett. The second tier of local government is Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council which has a number of environmental policies in its Neighbourhood Plan (2017). Jubilee Lake, is designated a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) with nature trails and is one of the main green spaces in the town.

ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

A full Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not deemed necessary, as this is a site that appears to have few natural features. It is therefore proposed to carry out an ecological Walk Over Site Survey. However, if the survey 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 main building is a steel frame rural farm structure with metal panels on a concrete base and large opening doors. The pitched roof of corrugated metal panels has Perspex daylighters. The building is currently used for storage and has a smooth concrete floor. There is a second similar unit behind the application building, currently empty.

ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

A survey of the site was conducted starting with the buildings. Bats being European Protected Species (EPS) were considered first. An assessment of the unit 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 space was thoroughly examined. No bats or evidence of bat droppings, discarded meals (insect wings) urine stains or entry scratching was found. The second unit was similarly inspected and nothing was found. In accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust

(2012) Guidelines and having regard to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, I conclude that the proposal will have no impact on bats.

As most of the area of the site is hard surfacing, it would appear to be a habitat of minimal ecological value. The edges are of rough grasses meadow grass (*Poa pretensis*), fescue (*Festuca ovina*) and couch (*Elymus repens*) with a few ruderals *Resida lutea*, *Persicaria maculosa*, *Linaria vulgaris*, etc. It is a habitat which may attract nectar seeking insects, bees, butterflies but little else. As there are no hedges in this part of the site, as potential linear habitats, where small mammals would use foraging for food and passing to other areas.

There are trees at the site boundary and the adjacent wooded copse. This will provide nesting, food sources (winter berries), and singing posts etc. for birds. These were inspected for active nests and nest building, using binoculars. None were found and, on the survey, the only species seen were a few gulls. Using the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) guidelines the proposal site is classed as low for Avifauna.

The site was also inspected for any evidence of wildlife. No runs were observed, footprints or droppings noted. No burrows or other excavations were evident of rabbits, hedgehogs and other mammals. Red fox will probably forage and pass through the site but none were noted. Voles, shrews and other small mammals probably use the vegetation cover as commuting routes but nothing was found and no mole hills had been dug. Badgers will not use this type of sparse habitat and no sett activity, passages through the scrub, latrines etc were found.

As there is no area of water near the proposal area, protected species like Great Crested Newts (GCN) would not be encountered. A GCN Suitability Index was therefore not considered necessary. Examination under stones and similar refugia sites found no evidence of amphibians, as well as the lack of suitable vegetation cover and water.

The survey and ecological evaluation have shown that the business park and its immediate surroundings have minimal interest for wildlife. The rest of the farm site will have habitats of greater ecological value and biodiversity. The PEA survey has shown that the proposed development will have minimal impact on the environment.

CONCLUSION

Offgrid Architecture has instructed an Ecological Assessment of Oxleaze Business Park to find if there is any wildlife of importance to the proposed development. This Report details the findings of the survey which indicates that there is a low probability of the presence of significant wildlife on this part of the site and therefore this should not affect the development proceeding.

Therefore, in my professional opinion this survey, analysis and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Report, should satisfy the requirements in respect of ecology and biodiversity enhancement for Wiltshire Council. I recommend that the application can

be considered on this basis and that no further environmental surveys are necessary to determine the proposed application.

REFERENCE

Existing location Plan

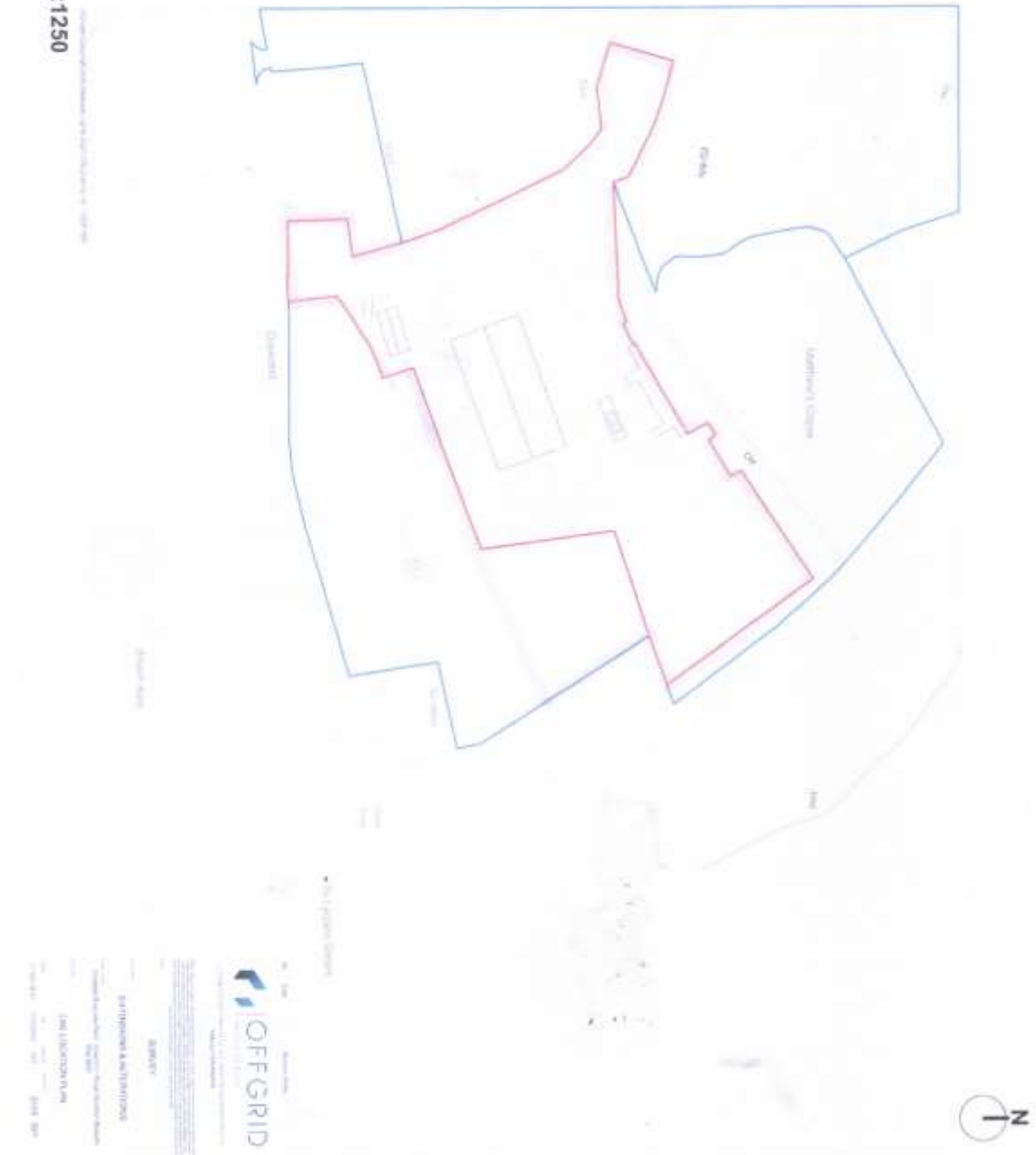
Neighbourhood Plan Area

Wildlife & countryside Act 1981

Wiltshire County Council Local Plan (LP)

EXG. LOCATION PLAN 1:1250

0 5 10 20 Feet
1:1250



RWB Neighbourhood Plan Area

