

# HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

**Hertfordshire LEADS**  
**Environmental Sustainability | Hertfordshire County Council**

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Raymond Lee  
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Herts AL8 6AE.

Your Ref: 6/2022/2226-2230/FULL

Ask for: M J Hicks

Tel: 01992 556158

Date: 13/12/2022

Dear Raymond

**Application:** Installation of a "private-wire" electricity cable between the Energy Centre, Tewin Road and Colt Technology Services Group Limited, 20 Black Fan Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1QA (Options 1- 5).

**Address:** 20 Black Fan Road Welwyn Garden City AL7 1QA

**Application No:** 6/2022/2226-2230/FULL

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on the above applications. I apologise for the delay in responding, but I would like to make comments on each of the applications as follows:

1.1 6/2022/2226/FULL The route of Option 1 is a southerly one, following the pavement for much way and will have a limited impact. However, the route leaves Knella Road and follows the entrance into Pollards Close, where it then crosses a moderate stretch of open ground at Hern's Wood and then goes through secondary woodland across Watchmead Local Wildlife Site, the former disused railway line. Clearly this route will be damaging to the existing vegetation, but the entrance to Pollards Close was former open land now lost partly to this new road. Whilst the laying of any cable will require excavation, this damage can be minimised with consideration to appropriate Root Protection Areas and ground restoration and re-seeding. There is no information to suggest the open ground at Hern's Wood supports any significant grassland interest.

1.2 It is apparent that precautions will need to be taken in respect of existing trees that could be possibly affected, and these have been outlined in the Planning Statement in respect of procedures for Root Protection Areas. For the most part these are landscaped features of value at the site level only, within

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the Industrial and adjacent urban areas of Welwyn Garden City, but Hern's Wood and the LWS area woodland are more significant locally. Whilst I consider there are no fundamental ecological constraints associated with the proposals, I advise that a Condition of Approval should be to provide a formal ground restoration plan. This will need to demonstrate how the development will restore areas subject to excavation and disturbance through the open ground and LWS. Use of existing soils, maintaining soil profiles and reseedling, along with measures to avoid mammals or other wildlife becoming trapped within any open trenches if exposed for longer periods, should also be included. This could be achieved within a formal Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP), which would also include the approach to dealing with trees along the route, currently referred to within the planning statement. This would provide a clear and independent strategy for remediation associated with the works, which is currently lacking in the context of a full application.

2.1 6/2022/2227/FULL The route of Option 2 is similar, again following the pavement for much way where it will have a limited impact. However, the route leaves Knella Road and follows the entrance into Leefield, at which point it turns NW and a much longer route crosses the large open space of Hern's Wood and then goes through secondary woodland established within Watchmead Local Wildlife Site, where it crosses the former disused railway line. Clearly this route will be more damaging to the existing vegetation where affected. Whilst the laying of any cable will require excavation, this damage can be minimised with consideration to appropriate Root Protection Areas and ground restoration and re-seeding. There is no information to suggest the open ground supports any significant grassland interest, although the Hern's Wood site appears to support fragments of ancient hedgerow which must not be damaged by any works.

2.2 It is apparent that precautions will need to be taken in respect of existing trees that could be possibly affected, and these have been outlined in the Planning Statement in respect of procedures for Root Protection Areas. For the most part these are landscaped features of value at the site level only, within the Industrial and adjacent urban areas of Welwyn Garden City, but Hern's Wood and the LWS woodland are more significant. Locally. Whilst I consider there are no fundamental ecological constraints associated with the proposals, I advise that a Condition of Approval should be to provide a formal ground restoration plan. This will need to demonstrate how the development will restore areas subject to excavation and disturbance through the open ground and LWS. Use of existing soils, their storage and replacement to maintain existing soil profiles, drainage and reseedling, along with measures to avoid mammals or other wildlife becoming trapped within any open trenches if exposed for longer periods, should also be included. This could be achieved within a formal Construction and Environment Management Plan, which would also include the approach to dealing with trees along the route, currently referred to within the planning statement. This would provide a clear and independent strategy for remediation associated with the works, which is currently lacking in the context of a full application.

3.1 6/2022/2228/FULL The route of Option 3 is southerly, and again follows the pavement for much way and will have a limited impact. However, the route leaves Knella Road and follows the entrance into Pollards Close, where it then crosses open ground and then a slightly longer route through secondary woodland across Watchmead Local Wildlife Site, where it crosses diagonally the former disused railway line. Clearly this route will be damaging to the existing vegetation, but the entrance to Pollards Close was former open land now lost partly to this new road, although the route seems to be across the remaining open grassland here rather than follow the road edge. Whilst the laying of any cable will require excavation, this damage can be minimised with consideration to appropriate Root Protection Areas and ground restoration and re-seeding. There is no information to suggest the open ground supports any significant grassland interest.

3.2 It is apparent that precautions will need to be taken in respect of existing trees that could be possibly affected, and these have been outlined in the Planning Statement in respect of procedures for Root Protection Areas. For the most part these are landscaped features of value at the site level only, within the Industrial and adjacent urban areas of Welwyn Garden City, but the LWS area woodland is more significant locally. Whilst I consider there are no ecological constraints associated with the proposals, I advise that a Condition of Approval should be to provide a formal ground restoration plan. This will need to demonstrate how the development will restore areas subject to excavation and disturbance through the open ground and LWS. Use of existing soils, maintaining soil profiles and reseedling, along with measures to avoid mammals or other wildlife becoming trapped within any open trenches if exposed for longer periods, should also be included. This could be achieved within a formal Construction and Environment Management Plan, which would also include the approach to dealing with trees along the route, currently referred to within the planning statement. This would provide a clear and independent strategy for remediation associated with the works, which is currently lacking in the context of a full application.

4. 6/2022/2229/FULL The route of Option 4 is also southerly, but follows the pavement for much if not all of the way. Neither Hern's Wood area or Watchmead Local Wildlife Site will be crossed, given the route will follow existing road edges / pavements, although the northern edge of the LWS may be affected depending on the space available. It is apparent that precautions will need to be taken in respect of existing trees elsewhere that could be possibly affected, and these have been outlined in respect of procedures for Root Protection Areas. These are landscaped features of value at the site level only, within the Industrial and adjacent urban areas of Welwyn Garden City. Consequently, I consider there are no fundamental ecological constraints associated with the proposals.

5. T6/2022/2230/FULL The route of Option 5 is northerly and follows the roadside verge / hardstanding areas for all of the way. Approaching the destination from the north, the open space and LWS are completely unaffected. It is apparent that precautions will need to be taken in respect of existing trees

that could be possibly affected, and these have been outlined in respect of procedures for Root Protection Areas. These are local ecological features of value at the site level only, within the Industrial area of Welwyn Garden City. Consequently, I consider there are no fundamental ecological constraints associated with the proposals.

6. In terms of impact on the semi-natural environments of trees, open grassland and woodland, the scale of impact from greatest to least is generally as follows: Option 2, Option 3, Option 1, Options 4 and Option 5. Whilst the impacts affecting habitats are to be regretted, it is possible to minimise their impacts with appropriate working practice and restoration. This has not been adequately outlined.

7. Clearly the longest routes across open ground at Hern's Wood will be the most damaging but may be cheaper given the less impact upon existing built infrastructure. Options 4 and 5 avoid crossing the Hern's Wood and LWS areas, but are inevitably longer. However, none of the options represent a fundamental constraint on ecological grounds, assuming appropriate restoration plans can be agreed. No such plans exist, and I advise that these must be a Condition of Approval where open ground and woodland is to be affected. They should also incorporate trees and grass verges for completeness. They should form part of a formal CEMP. This can be a generic document relating to all five applications, as all will impact somewhere upon open roadside verges and street trees, and where applicable, open ground and woodland depending on the options proposed.

8. Based on the above, I consider that the applications can be determined accordingly.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,



Martin Hicks MCIEEM  
Senior Ecology Officer, Hertfordshire Ecology