

HERTFORDSHIRE BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE

Environment, County Hall, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DN

Mr M Peacock
Case Officer
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 6A

Ask for: B. Tranter
Our Ref:
Your Ref: S6/2012/2608/MA
Tel: 01992 556155
Date: 04/01/2013

Dear Mr Peacock,

Planning application: S6/2012/2608/MA. Nyn Park, Well Road. Replacement boundary fence to Nyn Park Estate.

Thank you for consulting HBRC on the above application. We have the following comments to make:

1. HBRC database

Data held by HBRC on the Nyn Estate indicates that significant parts of the site are of ecological interest.

Much of the estate is included within two Ecology Sites in the HBRC database - Nyn Park (reference numbers 79/008) and Nyn Park House area (79/064). Ecology Sites are non-statutory and may be of wildlife interest, at least at a local level; though they may be included in the database purely as some ecological information is held on them. Whilst these sites are often a valuable starting point in identifying the county's wildlife resource, they do not meet the rigorous and quantifiable assessment criteria needed to identify them as Local (County) Wildlife Sites.

One Local (County) Wildlife Site, The Vineyard, Nyn Park (reference number 79/008/01), is also present within the boundary of the Estate. The description of this site is as follows:

This site is part ancient semi-natural, part old secondary woodland. The ancient woodland area is situated to the north, along the steep banks of a small brook and includes some willow (*Salix* spp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Aspen (*Populus tremula*). The secondary woodland forms the bulk of the site and comprises predominantly Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). The ground flora is moderately diverse and includes woodland indicators such as Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Hairy-brome (*Bromopsis ramosa*) and Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*) plus several sedges (*Carex* spp.) and ferns (*Dryopteris* spp.). Wildlife Site criteria: Old/ancient woodland with a semi-natural canopy and varied structure; part shown on Bryant's map; >2 ha; woodland indicators.

Of most importance is Well Wood, to the western side of Nyn Park, which is part of the Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) Northaw Great Wood. This is ancient hornbeam dominated woodland on acid soils.

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2. HBRC comments and recommendations

- a) The proposal states that the new fencing is to be set behind the existing hedge lines and that the hedges will be retained and further planted to infill gaps. We are happy with this arrangement as existing hedge lines will be kept and enhanced.
- b) Parts of the existing boundary for example within Well Wood and The Vineyard Wildlife Site, appear to be wooded and without boundary hedgerows. The construction of the fencing will obviously impact these habitats. Works must cause as little disturbance as possible to the ground flora which is often at its most diverse around the perimeter of woodlands. In addition, ancient features such as boundary banks may also be present and these should be protected.
- c) If there is the requirement to remove any trees and shrubbery nesting birds need to be taken into account. Birds nest in a wide variety of habitats. Many species nest in trees, in holes and crevices in the trunk, or high up in the canopy. Others nest in the vegetation that grows up trees, such as ivy. Bushes, hedgerows and scrub, such as bramble and tall ruderal vegetation are also used as breeding sites, and several species nest on the ground amongst the tall vegetation. The nesting season covers the period from 1st March to the end of August. However, some species of bird may nest well outside this period and some species of bird may breed in any month of the year, depending on prevailing weather conditions at the time.

Therefore we advise that the removal of trees and shrubs should be carried out during the period October-February only; to protect breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young. If this is not possible then a pre-development (same day) search of the area should be made by a suitably experienced ecologist for breeding birds and their nests. If active nests are found, then clearance work must be delayed until the juvenile birds have left the nest and are fully independent.

- d) As Well Wood is part of a SSSI Natural England must be informed of the proposals, as the works may impact the SSSI.

“Natural England must be consulted by public bodies if they wish to carry out work that may damage a SSSI, or if *they are considering authorising others to carry out operations that may do so*. This requirement applies to operations within a SSSI, and to operations outside the SSSI that may affect the features of interest.”

We trust these comments are of assistance in determining this application and should you require any further information or advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Tranter PhD MIEEM
Senior Ecological Consultant for HBRC