

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

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Mr David Elmore
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Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ask for: Anita Parry
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Date: 23/10/2020

Dear David,

Application Reference: 6/2020/2155/FULL

Proposed development at: Land adjacent to 45 Kentish Lane Brookmans Park Hatfield AL9 6NG

Proposal: Erection of dwelling

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on the above. I apologise for the delay with this reply. We previously commented on a pre app for this site (LPA reference 6/2020/0985/PA on 24/06/2020) and I have the following comments to make now:

I am pleased to see two ecological reports have been submitted in support of this application:

- *Ecological Appraisal (Cherryfield Ecology, 7 April 2020);*
- *Emergence and Activity Bat Survey (Cherryfield Ecology, 17 August 2020).*

The site was initially visited in April 2020 in order to determine whether there will be any impacts on habitats or species of conservation significance (including those protected by law); and to specify adequate avoidance, mitigation or compensation measures where necessary. The site comprises a vacant plot with uncut (but not rough) amenity grassland, scattered trees, tall ruderal / colonising vegetation, introduced scrub and Leylandii hedging.

Some of the trees on site are proposed for removal; however, sufficient replanting with native species is proposed in the Soft Landscaping Plan and will compensate for this loss.

Of course, any tree/shrub removal or significant works should be undertaken outside the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) to protect breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young. If this is not practicable, a search of the area should be made no more than two days in advance of vegetation clearance by a competent Ecologist and if active nests are found, works should stop until the birds have left the nest.

Follow-up bat activity surveys of a tree with high bat roosting potential, which is proposed for removal, were undertaken in July and August. Although bats were recorded flying close to the tree and into the site, no bats were recorded emerging from or re-entering the

tree. No roosts are confirmed, and no further surveys are considered necessary. I consider the LPA has sufficient information to fully consider bats (European Protected Species) prior to determination.

The site has potential to support reptiles and badgers, as well as nesting birds. The Recommendations in the Ecological Appraisal for an appropriately timed reptile survey and pre-commencement badger walkover survey should be followed by **condition** and I can suggest the following wording (or similar):

“A survey for reptiles should be undertaken to ensure that any presence is properly considered, and mitigation / compensation provided if necessary to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority before the site is cleared.”

Reason: To ensure reptiles are safeguarded from harm during site clearance in accordance with national legislation and local policy.

“Prior to commencement of the development (including vegetation clearance), a Badger walk-over survey of the site and 30m of adjacent land (access permitting) shall be carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist to check for badger activity. If badgers will be impacted on by the development proposals, appropriate mitigation to safeguard them must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. A licence may be required from Natural England to proceed lawfully.”

Reason: To ensure badgers are protected from harm during construction in accordance with national legislation and local policy.”

Japanese knotweed, an invasive plant listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, is present and should be prevented from spreading offsite. It is being dealt with as specified in the Landscape Specification and Maintenance Proposal (17 April 2020), and a photograph in the Ecological Appraisal taken in early April shows it to be undergoing destruction / eradication treatment.

There is an expectation in NPPF that development leads to net gains in biodiversity and sensible precautions and biodiversity enhancements for hedgehogs, bats, nesting birds, invertebrates, native-species hedgerow planting, and wildlife-friendly lighting are listed in the Ecological Appraisal, in Tables 13 and 14. These recommendations should be followed.

I trust these comments are of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Parry
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology