

# HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

Environmental Resource Planning  
Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN  
[ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01992 555220

Ms Emily Stainer  
Case Officer,  
Planning Dept,  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council,  
The Campus, Welwyn Garden City,  
Herts AL8 6AE.

Your Ref: 6/2020/1365/FULL  
Ask for: M J Hicks  
Tel: 01992 556158

Date: 31/07/2020

Dear Emily

**Application:** Erection of a 5-bedroom detached dwelling including formation of new vehicular crossover

**Address:** 34 Vineyards Road Northaw Potters Bar EN6 4PA

**Application No:** 6/2020/1365/FULL

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on the above application. I apologise for the delay in responding, but I would like to make the following comments:

1. There are no existing records in the HERC database for this site although there are local bat roosts. The application site appears to already be – or what has become – an apparently vacant plot consistent with other plots of similar size and conformity along the road. As such it now forms part of the existing ribbon development along Vineyards Road and cannot reasonably be considered to have been in any substantial agricultural use in recent years. Whilst it may never have been developed previously and as such could be considered a greenfield site, the plot may previously have been part of the garden of an adjacent plot and as such could be considered previously developed land. This could be demonstrated by former map evidence.
2. Whatever its history, the site location is within the existing developed area of residential properties. Consequently, there is unlikely to be any in principle ecological constraint, or substantial interest unless significant habitat features were present which pre-dated the adjacent developments, for which there is no evidence.
3. It is clear from recent aerial photos that the site previously supported considerable semi-natural vegetation in the form of trees, shrubs and rough grassland, consistent with the site having been neglected for many years. There appears to be a large roadside tree and one at the rear of the plot.

4. However, it is clear from the ecological report that the site has been recently cleared of most vegetation. This includes any pond that may have been present, although two small trees remain, a hornbeam and an oak. It is not known if the larger trees remain. I have no reason to believe the report does not provide a reliable view of the existing site.

5. Local resident comments suggest this clearance was undertaken in January 2020 so it is highly unlikely that this would have disturbed any breeding birds. The presence of muntjac – whilst pleasant to see – has little nature conservation significance. Whilst the local loss of wildlife habitat within the site is to be regretted, this was of some local value at the site level only and would not have represented a fundamental constraint. Furthermore, there is no evidence that any offence has been committed during the course of any site clearance.

6. The site is claimed to have been an orchard but whilst this may be true in respect of it supporting fruit trees, there is no evidence to suggest this is an historic orchard site. Aerial photo evidence does not indicate a substantial orchard being previously present.

7. Any reference to the history of Northaw Common Parkland must be viewed in the context of the ribbon development and other wide ranging developments (tennis courts, large garden plots and various buildings), which have also had a degrading impact on any historic integrity of the area already.

8. On the basis of the above, I consider there are no ecological objections to the development. Recommendations for ecological enhancements to the site itself and the new development, and a selection of these should be provided as a Condition of approval if approved. I advise that landscaping should also include the planting of fruit trees to provide this previous characteristic of the site if the application is approved.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,



Martin Hicks MCIEEM  
Senior Ecology Officer, Hertfordshire Ecology