

Ms Kirsty Shirley
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Hertfordshire LEADS
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Contact: Sophie Batchelor
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Date: 30 October 2023

Dear Ms Shirley,

Application: Erection of two industrial units for light industrial processes (E(g)(iii)) / general industrial (B2) / storage & distribution purposes (B8) and ancillary office space, with associated parking, access and supporting infrastructure.

Address: Plot 5610 Gypsy Moth Avenue Hatfield AL10 9BS

Application No: [6/2022/2759/FULL](#)

ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thank you for consulting this office on the above application.

Overall Recommendation:

- Further information and/or amendments required before application can be determined.

Summary of Advice:

- The mitigation measures and biodiversity enhancements demonstrated within the Ecological Appraisal by Ecology Solutions (November 2022) should be followed in full and must be clearly demonstrated within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) and secured by condition.
- A Biodiversity Net Gain Plan should be submitted and accompanied by a supporting Biodiversity Metric should the LPA seek BNG.
- Informatives for birds and hedgehogs should be added to any subsequent permission granted.

Supporting documents:

I have made use of the following documents in providing this advice:

- Ecological Appraisal by Ecology Solutions (Report date: November 2022).

- Landscape Masterplan by Macgregor Smith Landscape Architecture (Report date: 26 October 2022).
- Design and Access Statement by SRA Architects (Report date: 1 December 2022).
- 22.034 Cambria. Plot 5610 Hatfield_External Lighting 221128 by D&D Building Services Consulting Engineers Ltd. (Report date: 28 November 2022).

Comments:

I support the mitigation measures and biodiversity enhancements recommended within the Ecological Appraisal listed above; including, but not limited to those involving habitats, bats, hedgehogs and birds. This includes details of native species planting; vegetative boundary retention; a sensitive lighting scheme; ground cover clearance outside of the hedgehog hibernation period; hedgehog highways throughout the site boundary; tree felling/habitat removal outside of the bird nesting season; and the installation of bird boxes. I advise that these measures should be followed in full and must be clearly demonstrated within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) and **secured by condition**.

An External Lighting Plan has been submitted. This demonstrates that there will be limited impact on the existing tree/shrub belt to the west of the site, the most significant feature associated with the site. This reflects due regard to the potential presence of foraging and commuting bats.

Where the hedgehog hibernation period (October to April inclusive) and the bird nesting season (March to September inclusive) overlap during proposed works, see the recommended Informatives within the Informatives section below.

Although the Ecological Appraisal found no trees or buildings with roosting potential associated with the site, records do show the presence of a bat roost located approximately 400m south-west within one of the existing industrial buildings of Hatfield Business Park. Given this fact and the proximity of the site to connected potential bat foraging habitat as stated within the Ecological Appraisal, I recommend that bat boxes be installed in addition to the bird boxes recommended within the Ecological Appraisal, and that this be demonstrated within the suggested LEMP. This will aid in further increasing the ecological value of the site to bats post-development alongside the previously recommended habitat retention and sensitive lighting scheme. The Ecological Appraisal also highlighted the quality of the site in its likelihood for supporting invertebrate species. The inclusion of invertebrate refugia within this LEMP could therefore also be used to increase the ecological gain by this development.

This development will result in the loss of an area of semi-improved grassland, as well as rough grassland and dense shrub. A Landscape Planting Strategy has been submitted detailing proposed shrub species alongside a one-year Maintenance Schedule. The Landscape Proposal involves planting a thick buffer of berry-bearing native shrubs; the installation of bird boxes; and the planting of 23 native and non-native trees.

Achieving a measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to this development would be consistent with the requirements set out under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the recently adopted (October 2023) Local Plan Policy SADM 16. In order for this proposal to demonstrate a minimum of 10% BNG, this needs to be informed by an appropriate Biodiversity Metric calculation which assesses losses and gains in Biodiversity Units. Should WHDC wish to pursue BNG, I advise that a Net Gain Plan should be submitted as a **condition of approval**, informed by an appropriate Biodiversity Metric calculation which details how existing and proposed habitats have been assessed and how BNG can be delivered.

I have no reason to consider – based on the information submitted – that ecology represents a fundamental constraint in respect of the proposals. However, if WHDC wishes to pursue BNG, the metric calculations should be informed by an updated botanical survey (if necessary). Currently, in the absence of any other information, I consider the existing grasslands likely to be Other Neutral Grassland. I therefore advise that the provision of a Biodiversity Gain Plan should now be a **condition of approval**, consistent with local planning policy SADM 16.

Informatives:

All wild birds, their nests, eggs and young are afforded protection and in general terms it would be an offence to kill, injure or displace breeding birds and their young. Given the presence of suitable nesting vegetation, the presence of nesting birds cannot be ruled out. To reduce the risk of an offence being committed, a precautionary approach is required, and consequently I recommend the following **Informative** is added to any permission granted:

“In order to protect breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young, development should only be carried out during the period October to February inclusive. If this is not possible then a pre-development (i.e. no greater than 48 hours before clearance begins) search of the area should be made by a suitably experienced ecologist. If active nests are found, then works must be delayed until the birds have left the nest or professional ecological advice taken on how best to proceed”.

Similarly, whilst hedgehogs are not considered to represent a constraint, given the presence of suitable habitat on-site for potential foraging and hibernation, their use cannot be ruled out and I therefore recommend the following **Informative** is added to any permission granted:

“To avoid the killing or injuring of hedgehogs during development, best practice should keep any areas of grass as short as possible. The longer, ruderal vegetation should be cleared by hand. To avoid creating refugia that may be utilised by hedgehogs, materials should be carefully stored on-site on raised pallets and away from the boundary habitats. Any trenches on site should be covered at night or have ramps to ensure that any animals that enter can safely escape - this is particularly important if excavations fill with water.”

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,

Sophie Batchelor
Assistant Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.