

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

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Ms L Hale
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Herts AL8 6AE

Ask for: Bernie Fleming
Tel: 01992 555220

Date: 5 April 2016

Dear Ms Hale,

6/2016/0398/HOUSE

Conversion of existing loft space including addition of new dormer windows & roof light. Re-arrangement of the internal layout. External Alterations to include reduction of portico, change to fenestration, change of roof finish from plain clay tiles to slate and addition of stone sills and quoins

35 Kentish Lane, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, AL9 6NG

Thank you for your letter of 24 March 2016 and for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology. I am not aware of any ecological interest at this property but it is situated within a typical suburban landscape of large, established gardens. Extensive areas of semi-natural grassland and woodland including the 'Grasslands S. of Mymfield' and 'Queenswood Home Farm Grove' Local Wildlife sites (LWS) lie nearby and together, these habitats are likely to provide foraging opportunities for bats.

Whilst adverse effects on the LWS are not anticipated, it is likely that bats will also forage around the property and, given its design, may exploit opportunities to roost or shelter within it; there is evidence of bat activity and roosts nearby. Bats are protected under domestic and European law (including the Habitats *Regulations* 2010, as amended) and in general terms, it is an offence to disturb or harm a bat, or, damage or obstruct access to a roost. As considerable modifications to the roof space are proposed, bats that rely on the property to roost or shelter could be harmed and an offence could be committed.

Until a suitable survey is carried out, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will be unable to determine if bats are present, how they could be affected. Consequently, it will be unable to answer the tests in the Habitats Regulations and would be unable to determine this application.

To resolve this dilemma, the LPA should request the completion of a 'Preliminary Roost Assessment' by an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist to evaluate whether bats are (or evidence of them is) present and, if so, how they would be affected by the proposals. Such surveys can be undertaken at any time of year but must follow established best practice (Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, 2016).

The outcomes should be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to determination to enable it to discharge its obligations under the Regulations. If no evidence is found, the application can be determined accordingly. If evidence or potential is found, we would be happy to advise further but additional surveys would probably be required. Typically can only be carried out in summer (ideally between May and August) and so the applicant should avoid unnecessary delay.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours faithfully,

Bernie Fleming

Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology

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