

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Environmental Resource Planning, County Hall, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DN
ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01992 555220

Mrs J Pagdin
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Herts AL8 6AE

Ask for: Bernie Fleming
Tel: 01992 555220

Date: 13 November 2015

Dear Mrs Pagdin,

6/2015/1997/MAJ

Extension and refurbishment of the Grade II listed hotel following demolition of poor quality additions. Erection of student accommodation comprising of 361 beds, landscaping and associated works

Comet Hotel, St Albans Road West, Hatfield, AL10 9RH

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology with your letter of 22 October 2015.

I am not aware of any ecological records that are specific to the proposed development site and the grounds, comprising amenity grassland and an isolated block of broad-leaved woodland support modest ecological interest. This conclusion is supported by the ecological report prepared by SES (September 2015).

However, this did identify two 'moderate potential' bat roosts, one in the Comet Hotel (T3) and one in a single tree (T6) at the southern extremity of the site, although no evidence of use was found at either. Various plans indicate that T6 will be retained and SES sealed access to T6 after first ensuring there was no evidence of bat use (as reported by SES in its report addendum (dated 23 September 2015)).

Consequently, the proposed development now poses no threat to local bat populations.

The proposals go on to describe the measures to protect existing hedgerows and woodland and, in line with NPPF expectations, pursue biodiversity enhancement by the establishment of semi-natural grassland and additional tree planting etc. All these measures are welcomed.

Unfortunately, not all the recommendations of their ecological consultants appear to have been adopted and there is no evidence of the provision of bat and bird boxes and so on. These simple, low-cost measures can be incorporated into any building and information on how this might be achieved is provided by SES in their ecological report. In addition, there is also no indication of how T6 will be protected from the proposed felling of the adjacent T4. Although they do not represent reasons for refusal, both measures should be secured by appropriate means.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Best wishes,

Bernie Fleming

Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology

[Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities](#)