

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

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Mr D Elmore
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
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Ask for: Daniel Weaver
Tel: 01992 588257
Date: 04/05/2017

Dear Mr Elmore

LPA reference: 6/2017/0624/MAJ

Proposal: Erection of a 3 storey building for B8 (storage and distribution) (4,878 sq metres) and B1 (office/light industrial) (1,550 sq metres) use, together with 100 car parking spaces, 10 cycle parking spaces, boundary treatment, landscaping, lighting and access.

Location: Plot 5000 Hatfield Business Park Hatfield AL10 9EZ

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on this application.

Hertfordshire ecology holds no biological records (species or habitat) for the application site itself. The application site is an area of grassland with wooded boundaries to the west and north. The southern boundary is a section of soft landscaping consisting of semi-mature trees and low shrubs. Beyond the soft landscaping is Mosquito Way, a well-lit road which services the business park. Adjacent to the western boundary is what appears to be an attenuation pond within the grounds of the neighbouring school.

Due to the isolation of the site is unlikely that there will be many protected terrestrial species. The grassland is likely to be low in species diversity and regularly managed. There is the possibility that breeding birds may be using the site therefore I would advise including the following condition in any planning decision.

No removal of hedgerows, trees or shrubs, brambles, ivy and other climbing plants shall take place between 1st March and the 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds' nests immediately before the vegetation is cleared and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation should be submitted to the local planning authority.

Although it is likely that the biodiversity value of the grassland to be lost is low, the overall biodiversity value of the site will reduce as a result of this application. The applicant has stipulated in their Landscape Design Principles that they wish "To increase the biodiversity of the Site through the provision of areas of planting using native and wildlife friendly species." Presently the design for the eastern, northern, and southern boundaries will be a mixture of

native hedges, ornamental shrubs, and semi mature trees. The western boundary looks to enhance the remaining semi improved grassland with a wildflower seed mix to turn the area into a meadow. This will help to improve the biodiversity value of the site post construction although weather or not it equals that of the original value remains to be seen. The NPPF looks for a no net loss to biodiversity from development and enhancements where necessary. I would advise that the applicant looks carefully at their landscaping scheme to make sure that they have taken every opportunity to enhance biodiversity.

Lastly the maintenance plan within the Landscape Design and Access Statement only mentions management activities regarding the hedges, shrubs and trees on site. There is no mention of how the wildflower meadow will be created or managed. Wildflower meadows require a specific set of management activities for the first three to five years after seeding or they will likely turn to either low quality amenity/semi-improved grassland or be overgrown with tall ruderal species such as bramble and nettle. Neither of these outcomes will help to improve biodiversity within the site. I suggest that the applicant revises their Landscape Design and Access Statement to include this information.

I trust these comments are of assistance.

Regards,

Daniel Weaver PhD MSc BSc GradCIEEM
Senior Ecology and Built Environment Officer, Hertfordshire Ecology