

# 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

David Elmore  
Planning Department,  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council,  
The Campus, Welwyn Garden City,  
Herts AL8 6AE

Ask for: Simon Richards  
Tel: 01992 588483  
Date: 11/07/2019

Dear David

**Application:** Erection of a multi-franchise car dealership (sui generis use) with offices (B1 use class), workshops (B2 use class) and car storage (B8 use class), together with car parking, cycle parking, boundary treatment, landscaping, lighting and access

**Address:** Plot 5100 Mosquito Way Hatfield Business Park Hatfield AL10 9WN

**Application No:** 6/2019/1411/MAJ

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on the above, for which I have the following comments:

Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) has no species or habitat information for this property. The site is an open field surrounded by warehouses and light industry.

The application is accompanied by an ecological assessment by Ecology Solutions. This included an extended Phase 1 survey (January 2019) of the area including a badger survey, reptile survey, and ground based bat survey of trees and neighbouring buildings. It also referenced previous Phase 1 habitat surveys by Ecology Solutions from 2015 and 2017, which incorporated the present and adjacent site. The accompanying Phase 1 map identifies the area to consist largely of semi-improved grassland with some areas of amenity planting and hardstanding.

## Protected Species

The survey found no evidence of any bat roost features within the trees associated with the site. No badger setts or further field signs of badgers were found and no reptiles were recorded. I have no reason to doubt these findings and consideration of these species should not be a constraint to the determination of this application.

The proposed removal of vegetation may impact on breeding birds and a precautionary approach is advised. The following **Informative** should be included in any consent given.

“Any vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) to protect breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young. If this is not practicable, a search of the area should be made no more than two days in advance of vegetation clearance by a competent Ecologist and if active nests are found, works should stop until the birds have left the nest.”

### Habitats

The application site is composed largely of an open, semi-improved grassland. The grassland as a whole does contain a good diversity of species including 5 grass species and 27 broadleaved species (as listed in the ecological report), including a number of Local Wildlife Site indicators for neutral grassland. Whilst the site does not meet the criteria for any such designation based on existing information, its ecological interest is of local importance as a remnant of the grassland associated with the former airfield. The botanical interest may also be under-estimated given the sub-optimal time of year it was surveyed. The proposals require the removal of all of this grassland and its replacement with a buildings and hardstanding constituting a loss of biodiversity. The proposal will also remove six trees from the existing tree belt that lies on the southern and eastern boundaries, though I am pleased to see that most of this border line of trees will be retained.

The landscape access and design statement supporting the proposal includes measures to increase the biodiversity of the proposal. These are concentrated along a strip of land forming the southeast boundary to the scheme. I support the aims of this aspect of the proposal and accept that the Structural Park will provide some resources for wildlife, in particular those trees include within the 20 to be planted that bear fruit and blossom. However, the resulting parkland constitutes little more than a narrow landscaped perimeter, which does not provide adequate ecological compensation for the lost grassland or adequate biodiversity gain in line with the aims of the NPPF.

**Consequently, whilst I do not consider the site represents any significant ecology sufficient to object to the proposals, in respect of no net loss and achieving a net gain in biodiversity, I do not consider this has been achieved, as suggested in the Landscape Design and Access plan.**

Given the scale and type of development proposed, I do not believe it is possible to deliver these ecological requirements on site. Consequently, the LPA should consider Biodiversity offsetting as a means of achieving this expected biodiversity gain. To achieve this, a suitable project should be identified which can be supported locally to maintain or enhance a local habitat

resource, sufficient to compensate for the loss of this site. This should be **secured through a S106 agreement.**

I trust these comments are of assistance,  
Yours sincerely

Simon Richards  
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology