

# HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

Environmental Resource Planning, Hertfordshire County Council  
County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DN  
[ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ecology@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01992 555220

Mark Peacock  
Case Officer  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
Herts AL8 6AE

Ask for: Anita Parry  
Tel: 01992 556149  
Date: 19/10/2015

Dear Mark,

**Application ID: S6/2015/1061/MA**

**Location: Plot 6000, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield**

**Description: Erection of a private healthcare facility (use Class C2), to include car/cycle parking, boundary treatment, landscaping, lighting and access.**

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on these proposals.

I have seen the *Ecological Assessment* (by Ecological Solutions, dated May 2015) submitted with this application. The report states that a data search was commissioned from the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre. This should say Hertfordshire **Environmental** Records Centre, which it has been known as since November 2013.

The site was surveyed in May 2015 and consists of an area of semi-improved rough grassland fringed by a mix of ornamental planting, trees and scrub, as well as a disused car park and electricity sub-station. The habitats were assessed as being generally of low ecological significance.

The Arboricultural Development Statement (by CBA Trees, dated May 2015) identified a number of trees that will be retained and a number that will be removed. The majority of these appear to be Lombardy Poplars.

The site was found to have some commuting and foraging resources for protected species. Notwithstanding, no further surveys were considered necessary for badgers, bats, birds, amphibians, otters, water voles or invertebrates. Due diligence to nesting birds during tree works / site clearance was highlighted.

Suitable habitat for reptiles was identified and further surveys were recommended. Based on the results, a reptile mitigation plan may need to be produced. **The surveys should be secured as a Condition of Approval:**

- ***“A survey for reptiles should be undertaken to ensure that any presence is properly considered and mitigation / compensation provided if necessary to the satisfaction of the Local Authority before the site is developed.”***

To avoid harm to protected species, I advise a precautionary approach is taken to the works and the following **Informatives are** added to any permission granted:

1. ***“Protected Species - It is an offence to take or disturb the breeding or resting location of protected species and precautionary measures should be taken to avoid harm where appropriate. If protected species, or evidence of them, is discovered during the course of any development, works should stop immediately and advice sought as to how to proceed. This may be obtained from: Natural England: 0300 060 3900 or a suitably qualified ecological consultant.***
  - ***The removal of trees & shrubs should be avoided during the bird breeding season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible then a search of the area should be made by a suitably experienced Ecologist and if active nests are found, then clearance must be delayed until the nesting period has finished.***
  - ***Caution should be taken when moving debris piles or building materials as any sheltering animals could be impacted on.***
  - ***Trenches should have escape ramps to provide an escape opportunity for any animals that may have become trapped.”***
2. ***“Any external lighting scheme should be designed to minimise light spill, in particular directing light away from the boundary vegetation to ensure dark corridors remain for use by wildlife as well as directing lighting away from potential roost / nesting site.”***
3. ***Soft landscaping – “new trees and shrubs should be predominantly native species, particularly those that bear blossom and fruit (berries) to support local wildlife. Where non-native species are used they should be beneficial to biodiversity, providing a food source or habitat for wildlife.”***

No Biodiversity enhancements have been suggested which goes against the requirement of the NPPF for new developments to achieve a net gain for biodiversity; and to contribute to the green infrastructure network. Biodiversity enhancements should be incorporated into the development proposals, submitted and approved by the LPA, and secured by **Condition of Approval:**

4. ***“Biodiversity enhancements should be considered and could be in form of bat and bird boxes in trees, integrated bat roost units (bricks and tubes) in buildings, refuge habitats (e.g. log piles, hibernacula) for reptiles at the site boundaries, green roofs, wildflower / wetland / pond areas, etc. These should be considered at an early stage to avoid potential conflict with any external lighting plans. Advice on type and location of habitat structures should be sought from an ecologist.”***

To summarise:

- Reptile surveys are required to ascertain the use of the site. Mitigation may be required. As reptiles are not a European Protected Species, these surveys can be a *Condition of Approval*.
- No biodiversity enhancements have been suggested. I would like to see enhancements incorporated within the development scheme. These should be included as a *Condition of Approval*.
- Precautionary works to avoid harm to protected species in the form of *Informatives* for nesting birds, moving stored material, and covering exposed trenches.

I trust these comments are of assistance.

Kind regards,

Anita Parry  
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology