

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

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Mr D Elmore
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Ask for: Anita Parry
Tel: 01992 556149
Date: 06/03/2017

Dear Mr D Elmore,

Application Reference: 6/2016/2675/MAJ

Proposed development at: Queenswood School Shepherds Way Brookmans Park Hatfield AL9 6NS

Proposal: Erection of extension to existing sports hall, re cladding of existing roof and wall, following removal of existing mobile classrooms and increase parking provision from 85 to 102 approximately

Thank you for consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on this application. I apologise for the delay with this reply.

1. We have records of bats roosting in buildings within the school grounds, and they are likely to use trees in the vicinity for foraging and commuting.
2. A *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal* report (by Practical Ecology Ltd, dated December 2016) has been submitted with this application. The application site is described as comprising two portable cabins (classrooms), one large warehouse (sports hall), an outdoor store, hardstanding, amenity grassland, introduced trees and shrubs. The site is surrounded by trees of mixed ages/maturity.
3. The proposed development will be confined within the footprint of the existing sports building, with a small extension within the amenity grassland to the north and south of the existing sports hall. The amenity grassland has limited ecological value.
4. The site was considered unsuitable or unlikely to support protected species, except potentially breeding birds. A blackbird's nest was found on an external ledge of one of the cabins; and it is likely that nesting birds will also use trees and shrubs within the site.
5. No bats or evidence of bats were found in the four buildings affected by the proposals and they were assessed to have negligible potential to support them. A small outdoor store had moderate potential for roosting bats and the residential properties had high

potential (with integrated bat units and bat boxes on trees being present), however these buildings are not part of the development proposals and no further surveys or action is required.

6. A number of trees and shrubs (predominantly oaks) are proposed for felling (due to development and disease) and these will be replaced with oaks in appropriate locations identified by the ecological consultants. None of the trees proposed for felling are considered to have potential to support roosting bats.
7. Care should be taken to prevent the spread of Rhododendron, which is listed as an invasive species in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
8. To enhance biodiversity in the site, I welcome the suggestion to install bat boxes in suitable locations and on suitable trees.
9. To conclude, I consider that appropriate survey assessment, evaluation and mitigation have been reported by the consultants. I have no objections to these proposals; however, I recommend the following **Informatives** are added to any permission granted.
 - *New trees and shrubs should be predominantly native species, particularly those that bear blossom, fruit (berries) and nectar to support local wildlife; and night flowering plants to attract insects and increase foraging opportunities for bats. The planting of ash (Fraxinus excelsior) should be avoided due to the serious Ash dieback disease that is killing ash across Europe, and thus the subsequent ban on the movement of ash planting stock.*
 - *Existing trees (including the roots and overhanging branches) that are remaining on or adjacent to the site should be protected from damage. Protection barriers and/or a no-dig policy may be required and recommendations in the Tree Survey report (Hayden's, 09/12/2016) should be followed.*
 - *Demolition of buildings and the removal or severe pruning 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 last chick has fledged.*
 - *If bats or evidence for them is discovered during the course of works, work must stop immediately and advice sought on how to proceed lawfully from Natural England - tel: 0300 060 3900 or a licensed bat consultant.*
 - *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 sites.*

I trust these comments are of assistance.

Regards,

Anita Parry
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology