

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities

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The Campus
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Ask for: Bernie Fleming
Tel: 01992 555220

Date: 31 May 2022

Dear Emily,

6/2022/0863/FULL

Erection of detached two-storey brick building for B1 use with designated parking spaces for 6 vehicles and secure storage housing for 6 bicycles following demolition of existing timber building

Unit 13 Peartree Farm Welwyn Garden City AL7 3UW

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2022 which refers, and for consulting Herts Ecology.

Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre does not hold any notable records of ecological interest for this address or its immediate surroundings. This is not surprising given its urban setting. Despite this, it lies in proximity to established gardens and, beyond, areas of semi-natural vegetation.

Together, these habitats provide foraging and roosting opportunities for bats making it reasonable to conclude that they are active around the property and possibly roost or shelter within it; there are records of bat activity in the wider area. As demolition is proposed, bats that rely on it to roost or shelter could be harmed, and all bats are protected by law; in general terms, it is an offence to disturb or harm a bat, or damage or obstruct access to a roost.

However, given its setting, the lack of associated records, and the design and condition of the property, I do not consider there is sufficient likelihood of bats being present or affected for the Council to require a survey prior to determination.

Despite this, the risk remains that bats could make use of the building. Therefore, to reduce the likelihood of harm arising and of an offence being committed, and in the unlikely event that bats are found during demolition, I recommend that a

precautionary approach is taken and the following Informative is added to any permission:

“Bats and their roosts are protected at all times by law. To reduce the risk of an offence, work should proceed with caution. In the event of bats or evidence of them being found, work must stop immediately, and advice taken on how to proceed lawfully from an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist or Natural England.”

Both the Environment Act and planning policy strongly encourage that all development should deliver a biodiversity net gain. However, given the modest scale of this proposal, I consider it unrealistic that suitable measures could be designed that would deliver a meaningful net gain proportionate to its scale and impact. Consequently, I recommend that the delivery of a net gain can be waived in this instance.

Further to the above I am not aware of any other ecological constraints and the application can be determined accordingly.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Bernie Fleming

Ecology Advisor

Hertfordshire Ecology