

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

Environmental Resource Planning
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Mr Chris Carter / Gerry Ansell
Case Officer,
Planning Dept,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council,
The Campus, Welwyn Garden City,
Herts AL8 6AE.

Your Ref: 6/2018/0171/MAJ
Ask for: M J Hicks
Tel: 01992 556158
Date: 25/4/18

Dear Chris / Gerry

Application: Creation of a mixed-use quarter... plus associated car parking, access, landscaping, public art and other supporting infrastructure.
Address: Former Shredded Wheat Factory Welwyn Garden City AL8 6UN
Application No: 6/2018/0171/MAJ

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

1. The existing site has negligible ecological value, as confirmed in previous comments on this site.
2. The Landscape Design Statement includes:

6 BIODIVERSITY

- Seek to retain and enhance existing biodiversity assets on site
- Habitat creation and enhancement in an urban area.
- Implementation of a matrix of native planting including native tree and shrub, wildflower grassland and hedgerows.
- Improve the urban biodiversity through the selection of plants known to benefit the local fauna including nectar, pollen and fruit producing plants.
- Planting proposals have been chosen for their suitability in an urban environment.
- The use of green and brown roofs and green 'living walls' are an integral part of the design and will provide additional ecological benefit across the site.

This is supported, although what existing open space habitat there is will be heavily modified.

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HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL,
DACORUM BOROUGH, EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT, HERTSMERE BOROUGH, NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT,
CITY AND DISTRICT OF ST ALBANS, THREE RIVERS DISTRICT, WATFORD BOROUGH, WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH

3. Management and maintenance includes:

11.5 Species Rich Grassland

Establishment maintenance:

- Regular mowing within the first growing season and removal of arisings;
 - Cutting 2 x annually after first growing season;
 - Cutting regime to vary in different areas by varying time and height of cut to help with habitat creation and encourage species diversity e.g. 1-4 cuts per year with timing to allow seeding of most species to occur before first cut;
 - To protect reptiles, only cut grassland during conditions when reptiles are active and able to move away from machinery (air temperatures above 8 °C). Cut in one direction to encourage movement of reptiles into adjacent suitable
 - Continuation of establishment maintenance requirements
 - Pruning of protruding growth and to prevent undesired spreading;
 - Top up mulch annually to achieve 75mm layer. habitat and avoid trapping reptiles in the path of machinery.
 - Trim edges to hard standing and tree pit mulch circles;
 - Arisings to be used on site to create compost heaps and hibernacula;
 - Watering to ensure moisture levels are maintained appropriate for optimum growth;
 - Repair damaged or failed areas by re-seeding;
- and
- Removal of litter to maintain the site in a tidy condition.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE

- Continuation of establishment maintenance requirements
 - Pruning of protruding growth and to prevent undesired spreading;
 - Top up mulch annually to achieve 75mm layer. habitat and avoid trapping reptiles in the path of machinery.
 - Trim edges to hard standing and tree pit mulch circles;
 - Arisings to be used on site to create compost heaps and hibernacula;
 - Watering to ensure moisture levels are maintained appropriate for optimum growth;
 - Repair damaged or failed areas by re-seeding;
- and
- Removal of litter to maintain the site in a tidy condition.

This is supported.

4. The Landscape Masterplan identifies an area in the NW corner as a generous area of native habitat. A larger undeveloped area than this has been present since at least 2000 so in reality this contribution is in fact reduced.

5. Much is made of Ebenezer Howard's original Garden City concept in support of the proposals. However, even whilst Letchworth was being built, Howard – a philosopher, not a town planner – was resigned to recognise the combination of a sustainable town *and* country failed due to the realities of the market and farming economy of the day. Nevertheless the idea is positive – particularly in the current climate.

Consequently, whilst I support Howard's aspiration presented in support of 05 Landscape Proposals "*Parks and gardens, orchards and woods, are being planted in the midst of the busy life of the people, so that they may be enjoyed in the fullest measure...*" it is disappointing to note there does not appear to be any such functional landscaping proposed, at least as outlined within 5.3

Landscape Masterplan. Previously there was a mini-orchard. There is scope for improving this with traditional fruit tree management, espaliers, edible boundaries using plums, herb gardens, and perhaps even vegetable plots where possible. The nearest to this approach appears to be the proposed Sensory Garden. Any such landscaping would clearly better reflect the aspirations which it is implied this development will provide and would also bring biodiversity enhancements as well as ecosystem services. It would also encourage some direct engagement with the natural world within what will clearly be a modern urban environment.

Therefore whilst I don't object to the landscaping proposals, I consider they could be amended to incorporate such opportunities where appropriate.

6. The current proposals propose a number of changes in terms of use and layout of the development from the originally permitted scheme. **I have no reason to consider there are any ecological constraints associated with any such changes.**

7. The Environmental Statement updates the ecological surveys where necessary and provides an assessment of impacts. No recent peregrine falcon records have been made but measures required to adequately deal with this species if necessary have previously been agreed and implemented, as has been outlined within the ES. Other measures proposed to deal with biodiversity issues on-site are acceptable.

8. The landscaping will provide habitat resources within the development many of which will enhance the site given its existing built form, but I do not think they will fully compensate in terms of open land resource lost in the NW corner. However, this is of relatively low ecological significance. I also note the proposal to create green roofs which is supported.

9. On the basis of the above **I do not consider there are any ecological constraints associated with the modifications.** However, I hope the landscaping suggestions as outlined can be given some positive consideration.

I trust these comments are of assistance,

Regards,

Martin Hicks MCIEEM
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology