

HERTFORDSHIRE ECOLOGY

Providing ecological advice to Hertfordshire's Local Authorities and communities

Environmental Resource Planning
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Clare Howel
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The Campus, Welwyn Garden City,
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Ask for: Simon Richards
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Date: 25/09/2020

Dear Clare

Application: Outline planning application for a hybrid application for demolition of existing hostel, development of a four storey 100 bed YMCA Hostel (All details submitted for determination) and a 2, 3 and 4 storey building providing up to 43 residential apartments (All details retained for future determination as reserved matters, except means of access) with associated car parking and landscaping

Address: One YMCA, 90 Peartree Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3UL

Reference 6/2019/2714/OUTLINE

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

Bats

A Preliminary Roost Assessment and follow-on activity survey were carried out by Bradley Murphy Design (BMD). This identified that three of the buildings had 'low' bat roosting potential and the remaining five had 'negligible' bat roosting potential. A follow-on activity survey of the building with low potential found no evidence of a roost (report date 01/10/2019). Despite the activity survey being carried out in September, a potentially suboptimal time of year, the weather conditions were favourable for bats and I accept the timing of this survey in this instance. Consequently, I consider sufficient surveys have been undertaken to ascertain bats are not roosting at the property. I do not consider any further survey are required and advise that bats do not need to be considered as a constraint to these proposals.

In addition, a mature oak within a line of mature broadleaved trees along the eastern boundary of the site, had potential roost features and was assessed as having low roost potential. It is understood that the removal of this tree does not form part of the present proposal. However, if the removal of this tree is proposed, then it should be soft felled under the supervision of an appropriately qualified ecologist in line with Bat Conservation Trust best practice guidelines. I advise the inclusion of a suitably worded condition, if appropriate, to cover this eventuality.

Habitats and biodiversity gain.

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment Phase 1 Habitat Survey. The site is composed in the main of buildings and hardstanding, and semi-natural habitats that are present were identified as being species poor and heavily managed. I have no reason to disagree with this conclusion.

However, to meet the aims of the NPPF, the development should demonstrate that it compensates for any loss, including for the sixteen trees proposed for removal, and ultimately achieves a biodiversity net gain. For the LPA to assess whether this has been achieved, I advise a **Landscape and Ecological Management Plan** is required giving details of species in the planting scheme of benefit to pollinators and local wildlife, as well as showing the number, location and type of ecological enhancement.. This should include the recommendations of the ecological report and can be submitted as a reserved matter once details of the landscaping scheme are known.

I trust these comments are of assistance,
Yours sincerely

Simon Richards
Ecology Advisor, Hertfordshire Ecology