

The Hoo, Great Gaddesden



Client
Bidwells

Services
Ecological consultant

Start date
May 2017

Completion date
Ongoing

Region, location
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

UES contact
Mark Halliwell

The proposed development includes repair works and alterations to a Grade II* listed building and outbuildings and restoration of a historic dew pond.

United Environmental Services (UES) Ltd. were initially appointed by Bidwells to undertake a suite of ecological surveys to inform the proposed redevelopment of the site. Surveys for UK and European protected species, such as bats and great crested newts (GCN), have been undertaken onsite.

Bats

A variety of bat surveys have been undertaken over the years as different phases of the site have been brought forward for redevelopment and subsequent planning and listed building applications. Surveys conducted include preliminary roost assessments, presence / absence surveys, swarming surveys and hibernation surveys. Over the course of the project a total of twenty-seven bat roosts have been recorded, comprising day, transitional, maternity, feeding and hibernation roosts used by common pipistrelle, brown long-eared, Natterer's and barbastelle bats.



Barbastelle bat
Barbastella barbastellus

Our ecologists are licensed and experienced bat surveyors. We're legally allowed to disturb bats when we're surveying them, which includes entering known bat roosts and handling bats when necessary.

All species of bat are legally protected, and it is an offence to capture, injure, kill or disturb a bat, or damage, destroy or obstruct access to their roost. A number of European protected species (EPS) mitigation licences have been secured by UES to permit the permanent destruction of the bat roosts. The licences detailed the mitigation and compensation measures to be implemented throughout construction and operation, including the construction of a dedicated bat loft.

To secure the licences UES had to demonstrate to Natural England that the proposed development will maintain the favourable conservation status of bats onsite, and that the development will meet the 'three tests'.

The project is being managed by a licenced bat ecologist within UES to ensure positive consultation with the local planning authority and Natural England.

Great crested newts

GCN surveys were undertaken by UES to accompany a planning and listed building application to enhance the existing historic dew pond onsite. The aim of this application was to enhance and re-shape the existing pond, including re-lining the bottom in order to hold more water.

A small population of GCN were recorded in the dew pond and a medium population of GCN was recorded in an offsite pond approximately 550m from the site. GCN are a European protected species; the animals and their eggs, breeding sites and resting places are legally protected.

UES secured a EPS mitigation licence from Natural England to permit the lawful temporary exclusion of GCN from the dew pond. A trapping and translocation scheme is due to start onsite in 2024 prior to the start of construction works. Reprofiling of the ponds basin and banks will be carried out to ensure optimal conditions for GCNs, specifically creating a deeper lobe of the pond such that at least some water will persist all year enabling efts to metamorphose. Native aquatic and marginal planting will also be undertaken to provide egg laying opportunities. These works are part of a broader ecology enhancement strategy onsite which also sees the restoration of another historic pond which has dried out.