

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

The developer's ecological consultant identified no significant ecological issues. Issues relating to nesting birds, hedgehog, a bee orchid and biodiversity enhancement measures can be resolved via condition and/or informative.

Protected Species

A valid ecological report has been provided, which included eDNA surveys of ponds for great crested newts (gcn) in the locality. No evidence of any protected species was recorded and all were either assessed as very unlikely to be present or in the case of gcn no evidence recorded. I have no reason to doubt the findings and conclusions of the report. No further information or measures are required.

Nesting Birds

The development will result in the loss of hedge and ornamental shrubs, potential bird nesting habitat. All British birds nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended. I recommend a condition along the following lines be applied to any permission.

No works to trees, hedge or shrubs shall occur between the 1st March and 31st August in any year unless a detailed bird nest survey by a suitably experienced ecologist has been carried out immediately prior to clearance and written confirmation provided that no active bird nests are present which has been agreed in writing by the LPA.

Hedgehog

The site was assessed as low risk for hedgehog a UK Biodiversity Priority Species. I would regard this risk as very low, the site lacking significant cover for this species. In my opinion it would be unreasonable to request reasonable avoidance measures and that the risk can be covered by an informative along the following lines.

The applicant is reminded that, under the Wild Mammal (Protection) Act 1996 it is an offence to inflict unnecessary suffering to wild mammals such as hedgehog. Planning consent does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act.

Bee Orchid

Bee orchids are uncommon in Greater Manchester but not rare and nationally are on the increase according to the 2020 BSBI update. They are not listed under schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is not protected in England and Wales. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal to translocate a turf with the bee orchid is reasonable and proportionate to the ecological value of the plant. *The details can be conditioned along the lines proposed in section 4.5 of the ecological report.*

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 174 of the NPPF 2021 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The development will result in the loss of a small area of amenity grassland, ornamental shrubs, one semi-mature tree and some young hedge lines. These will be replaced with hardstanding, replacement hedges, one replacement tree and some ornamental shrubs. Given the reduced percentage of vegetated habitats, there is a risk that the development would result in a net loss of biodiversity at the site level. I am satisfied that the

replacement hedge proposals are adequate and that wildlife issues, restricted to nesting birds can also be dealt with on the site.

The actual gross biodiversity unit value of the site is however very low, probably under 0.1 biodiversity units with the proposed landscaping even if of low value likely to reduce the loss to around 0.05BU. The key to achieving net gain will be the planting of an adequate number of native trees. Either one heavy standard likely to achieve medium size within 30 years. (defined as 30cm diameter at breast height) eg beech or silver birch or several smaller native trees.

I am satisfied that given net gain is achievable that the details of the tree planting, hedge planting and bird box provision can be conditioned.