

68578 – Saw Mills, off Spring Street, Ramsbottom

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

Further bat emergence surveys are recommended. Other ecological issues relating to nesting birds, proximity to a watercourse and ecological enhancement measures can be dealt with via condition.

Bats

A valid daytime visual bat survey of the exterior and interior of the buildings has been provided. Owing to the number of potential access points and locality the building, the main stone building has been assessed as moderate risk. The second building has been assessed as negligible risk. In line with best practice guidelines two further dusk and or dawn surveys have been recommended for the moderate risk building. ***I agree that further surveys are required. These should be carried out prior to determination*** as:

Current guidance states it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development is established before the planning permission is granted otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision (UK Government Guidance within the ODPM Government Circular 06/2005)

It should also be noted that the bat activity season is drawing to a close. At least one survey should occur in August. If not already commissioned I would recommend these are requested asap, to avoid potential delays in processing the application. i.e., until April or May 2023.

Nesting Birds

The bat and bird assessment identified probable nesting birds on the buildings to be demolished. There is also potential bird nesting habitat on the wider site. 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 demolition shall commence or works to trees 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.

Invasive Species

The development is adjacent to a watercourse a high-risk habitat for Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam. No information has been provided as part of this application. The risks are however low as the development proposals are restricted primarily to hardstanding with no direct impact to the Brook channel. I am therefore satisfied that an informative is all that is required for this particular development proposal.

It is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended to introduce, plant or cause to grow wild any plant listed in Schedule 9 part 2 of the Act. Species such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam are included within this schedule. If any such species will be disturbed as a result of this development a suitably experienced consultant should be employed to advise on how to avoid an offence.

Protection of Watercourse

There is a moderate to high risk during and post development of negative impacts from debris, dust, sediment and pollutants entering the watercourse. I recommend a method statement is put in place to protect the Brook during demolition and construction e.g. temporary fencing, silt traps etc. This can be conditioned along the following lines.

No development, demolition, site clearance, earth moving shall take place or material or machinery brought on site until a method statement to protect the unnamed watercourse from accidental spillages, dust and debris has been supplied to and agreed by the LPA. All measure will be implemented and maintained for the duration of the construction period in accordance with the approved details.

Further information on surface water drainage post development should also be provided. ***This can also be conditioned.***

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. There appears to be limited loss of vegetated habitats, restricted to one tree. Species impacts include loss of bird nesting and bat roosting opportunities. Mitigation should be provided for loss of the tree and bird and bat roosting opportunities. It is however premature to set the details of any condition until the findings of the bat surveys have been provided.

Ecologist

GM Ecology Unit