

GMEU response

Summary

As for the previous application 67301, clarification on the state of the structures to be demolished is recommended. Other potential ecological issues including nesting birds and ecological mitigation and enhancement can be dealt with via condition and or informative.

Bats

Bats can roost in a range of structures and natural features including buildings, trees, retaining walls etc. A number of structures are proposed for demolition and I am not clear of their nature and potential to provide bat roosting habitat. From aerial photos they do not appear substantial. ***As a first step I would recommend photographs are provided of any structures proposed for removal external and internal if applicable so that I can determine whether a formal bat assessment is required.***

Nesting Birds

The site appears to include 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 site clearance 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

Sites such as this are moderate risk for invasive species such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam. I recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

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.

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 site appears to be of low ecological value but will result in a net increase of bare and developed ground. Some form of mitigation is recommended. I would suggest some form of native boundary planting as mitigation. This could be a shelterbelt or native hedge. I also recommend a couple of bird boxes as mitigation for loss of nesting habitat. I am however amenable to other options, given the extent of the blue edge. If off site planting would be feasible. ***The details can be conditioned.***