

Summary

There are no significant ecological issues associated with this development. Potential issues associated with bats, nesting birds and biodiversity mitigation can be dealt with via condition and or informative.

Bats

A valid bat report has been provided. This assessed the building complex as low risk, with one dusk survey carried out at an appropriate time of year, finding no evidence of bats roosting. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report. As individual bats can on occasion turn up in unexpected locations, I recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Whilst the buildings to be demolished have been found to be very low risk for bats, the applicant is reminded that under the 2019 Regulations it is an offence to disturb, harm or kill bats. If a bat is found during demolition all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed bat worker employed to assess how best to safeguard the bat(s).

Other Protected & Priority Species

Given the sites lacks any vegetated habitats and there are no high risk habitats for any such species with ecological connectivity to the site, in the zone of influence of the site, I am satisfied that no further information or measures are required.

Nesting Birds

Evidence that birds could access the building was found, though no evidence of nesting recorded. A small area of scrub, encroaching on to the site was assessed as providing bird nesting opportunities. 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 or shrubs shall occur or demolition commence between the 1st March and 31st August in any year unless a nesting bird survey method statement by a suitably experienced ecologist has been supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Section 180 of the NPPF 2023 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. 10% BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). The development site consists primarily of building and hardstanding with scattered early successional vegetation and scrub.

I note that the applicant has ticked yes on the application form, with regards BNG. This is however incorrect as less than 25sqm of vegetation is present and therefore the development is exempt from BNG under the de minimis rule.

Mitigation and enhancement should however be provided for the loss of a very small area of scrub and the loss of bat and bird habitat. I note that there is a small amenity area proposed along the elevation with Lawrence St as well as roof top amenity. The 3D imagery indicates that these will be soft landscaped. I am satisfied that these areas could, subject to the detail, provide more than

adequate mitigation and enhancement for vegetation loss on the site. Bat and bird boxes should be integrated in to the new build.

The details of the soft landscaping and wildlife measures can be provided via condition.