

Planning application 69455 Jacksons Fold Farm

Summary

Further information on bats, barn owl and biodiversity net gain is recommended prior to determination. Other ecological issues can be resolved via condition.

Bats

Two bat assessments have been provided dating from 2014 and 2023. The more recent bat assessment does not appear to have included the existing stables and has assessed the other buildings as moderate and low risk, recommending further dusk surveys. The 2014 survey assessed all buildings as low risk, recommending further dusk surveys and found evidence of likely use of the main barn by brown long-ear bats as a feeding perch.

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).

I therefore recommend that prior to determination and updated bat assessment of the stable block is provided along with dusk and or dawn survey for all buildings assessed as low and moderate risk .

Barn Owl

Barn owl are known to be present in the Pilsworth area. *Confirmation that there is no evidence of this species utilising the buildings should be provided prior to determination.*

Nesting Birds

Swallow were recorded in 2014 using the buildings. The 2023 survey notes the buildings have bird nesting potential. Trees and shrubs potential bird nesting habitat will also be lost. 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 building and demolition works commence 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.

Himalayan Balsam

Various photographs within the application indicate that this species listed under schedule 9 part 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is present on the site. It is likely present in the surrounding landscape too. Eradication would therefore likely be unreasonable. Measures should however be applied to ensure it is controlled and spoil contaminated with balsam is not transferred off-site during the construction. I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any development, demolition or vegetation clearance a management strategy for himalayan balsam should be supplied to and agreed in writing to the LPA. The agreed management shall be adhered to and implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain

Section 174 of the NPPF 2021 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Now Places for Everyone (PfE) has been through Inquiry, thematic policies in the plan can now be given 'great weight' in planning decisions. This includes the BNG Policy.

The site consists primarily of buildings, hard standing and rough grassland. This will be replaced with buildings and gardens. It is unclear from the information provided whether or not net gain will be achieved on the site, dependent on how the land to the north of the proposed stable is likely to be landscaped. Mitigation for wildlife (bats and birds) can likely be resolved on-site dependent on the outcome of the additional bat and bird surveys.

I recommend a biodiversity net gain assessment provided prior to determination.