

69530 – Walshaw Hall, Bradshaw Road, Walshaw

Summary

There are no significant ecological issues associated with this development.

Bats

Valid bat reports have been provided. The building was assessed as low risk and one emergence survey carried out at an appropriate time of year. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded. Given the minimal works to elevations and the roof, I have no reason to disagree with 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 building to be converted has 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 all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed bat worker employed to assess how best to safeguard the bat(s).

Other Protected Species

Other than a minor extension to hardstanding on to lawn, there is no loss of vegetated habitat or disturbance. I am therefore satisfied that it is very unlikely that there are any other protected species issues. No further information or measures are required.

Nesting Birds

There appears to be no loss of trees or shrubs. Evidence of birds nesting was however recorded in the building. 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 building works associated with roof shall 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.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain

Section 180 of the NPPF 2023 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. A very small area of low ecological grassland will be lost to car park with a new hedge/line of shrubs shown around the car park on the proposed layout. Wildlife issues appear restricted to nesting birds. I am satisfied that the proposed boundary planting will mitigate for the loss of amenity grassland. Provision of a couple of bird boxes around the site or on the building would mitigate for any loss of bird nesting habitat.

With regards biodiversity net gain, it is probable that if it were mandatory the development would require a biodiversity net gain statement as a rough estimate of the hardstanding expansion was calculated at around 30sqm just above the de minimis threshold. I would however regard it as unreasonable to request an assessment for such a minor loss, whilst not mandatory, given the clear potential to achieve net gain.

The details of the planting around the car park and bird nest boxes can be conditioned

Ecologist

GM Ecology Unit