

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

The developer's ecological consultant identified no significant ecological issues. Issues relating to bats, nesting birds and biodiversity enhancement measures can be resolved via condition and or informative.

Bats

A valid bat assessment has been provided. No evidence of bats was recorded and the buildings on the site assessed as having negligible bat roosting potential. I have no reasons 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 development has been assessed as 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).

Nesting Birds

The buildings appear to be very low risk for nesting birds. The temporary classroom is located within a line of trees and scrub, potential bird nesting habitat that may be disturbed during demolition but given the existing level of disturbance associated with a school, I am satisfied that the risks are again very low. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

The applicant is reminded that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended it is an offence to remove, damage, or destroy the nest of a wild bird, while the nest is in use or being built. Planning consent does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. If a bird's nest is suspected work should cease immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the nest(s).

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. There appears to be minimal loss of vegetated habitat (a very small area of the playing field) and no wildlife issues associated with this development.

I recommend provision of one bird box as enhancement for wildlife. The details can be conditioned.