

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

Potential ecological issues include bats, nesting birds, giant hogweed and biodiversity mitigation and enhancements.

Bats

The buildings on site were assessed for bat roosting potential. All were assessed as having negligible bat roosting potential, all buildings lacking obvious bat roosting features, largely of a type that is less likely to be utilised by bats and subject to high levels of lighting. I have no reason to doubt that each building in isolation is negligible risk. This is however a large complex of buildings, in a high risk location for bats, given the proximity to the River Irwell, Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal SBI, Hutchinsons Goit, Lower Hinds SBI and Swan Lodge SBI. Therefore whilst accepting it is very unlikely that any high value roosts, or rarer bat species are present, occasional use by species such as common pipistrelle cannot be easily ruled out using standard survey methods.

I therefore would recommend precautionary working measures for bats during demolition and building extension be conditioned as part of any permission.

Nesting Birds

Feral pigeon were present on the site and could gain access to buildings. Therefore whilst no evidence of nesting was recorded, the consultant was unable to rule out the possibility of birds nesting in some of the buildings. I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

No demolition shall occur unless a detailed bird nest survey by a suitably experienced ecologist has been carried out immediately demolition and written confirmation provided that no active bird nests are present which has been agreed in writing by the LPA unless the species present is feral pigeon in which case a general license issued by Natural England authorising destruction of feral nests should be provided to the LPA.

Giant Hogweed

Giant hogweed was recorded on the existing amenity grassland. Whilst this is being retained and giant hogweed is present just off site along the River Irwell, given the public health as well as ecological issues associated with this species, I recommend the plant is removed. *This can be conditioned, though technically its removal is not required to facilitate the development.*

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).

No vegetated habitats are to be lost with existing amenity grassland and landscaping retained and protected during construction. There also appears to be no wildlife issues other than displacement of feral pigeon roosts. The redeveloped site will have an increased percentage of the site under soft landscaping. *The final details of the soft landscaping can be conditioned.*

I accept that the development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain under the de minimis rule as less than 25sqm of vegetated habitat appears to be lost. Protection of the retained habitats on the site will however need to be conditioned during development to prevent accidental triggering

of the need for a BNG metric, as there is the potential for more than 25 sqm of vegetation to be lost or 5m of hedge. I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines

Prior to development, earthworks or demolition existing soft landscaping and vegetation will be protected from accidental damage, using measures agreed in writing by the LPA.

With regards wildlife, given the high value location of this site, I recommend enhancement in the form of bat and bird boxes are provided. *The finalised details can be conditioned.*

Ecologist

Planning

Investment, Development and Housing

Place