

Planning application 70805 Land off Fletcher Fold

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

The main ecological issue is confirmation of the sites BNG baseline. Other ecological issues relating to bats, nesting birds, other wildlife and invasive species can be dealt with via condition.

Bats

A number of trees were assessed as providing bat roosting potential. Currently all are shown as retained, this may however change as the consultant noted that trees had been removed as part of the site remediation that had been proposed for retention.

I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

The removal of certain trees may have the potential to cause harm to bats as identified in the Ecological Assessment TEP ref. 10188.002 version 2.0 Table 4 and shall not in any circumstances occur unless further information has been provided to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority

The consultant also noted that the retained trees provided potential foraging habitat and should be protected from external lighting. Based on the proposed layout, I would regard it as unlikely that external lighting will be an issue on this site. No further information or measures are required.

Other Protected Species

No evidence of any other protected species was found or regarded as likely. I agree with this assessment having accepted as part of the site remediation the absence of any such species. Whilst badger could theoretically utilise the site, I am satisfied that this is very unlikely and can be covered by general precautionary working measures. (see below under other wildlife). No further information or measures are required.

Nesting Birds

Further tree and scrub removal is proposed. Potential bird nesting habitat. 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 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.

Other Wildlife

Habitats on the site provide suitable cover for species such as hedgehog and amphibians such as common toad, which combined with the suitable habitats nearby for such species (Goshen Wood and Hampson Mill Lodge) increase the level of risk. I therefore agree with the consultant that precautionary working measures should be applied. I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any further earthworks or vegetation clearance a precautionary working measures strategy for mammals such as hedgehog and badger and amphibians such as common toad will be provided to and agreed in writing by the LPA.

Invasive Species

A number of species listed under schedule 9 part 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded on the site, including japanese knotweed, himalayan balsam, monbretia and a Cotoneaster. I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any earthworks a method statement detailing control measures for himalayan balsam, japanese knotweed, monbretia and Cotoneaster should be supplied to and agreed in writing to the LPA. The agreed method statement 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 (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).

A net gain assessment has been provided. However, I would note that the baseline was fixed at site clearance stage at 4.2 biodiversity units (see planning application 66306), the baseline appearing to have been recalculated based on the current site. The statutory metric also does not appear to be available, therefore I was unable to check whether the figures appeared reasonable and achievable.

I would however note that the agreed baseline was calculated utilising the defra metric v2. It will therefore require converting to the statutory metric, which is likely to result in an amended baseline biodiversity value as the scoring criteria for the habitat conditions have been changed since defra metric v2.

I therefore recommend that prior to determination the statutory metric is recalculated based on the agreed baseline at site clearance and the revised statutory metric and net gain assessment provided.

With regards wildlife I recommend provision of bird and bat boxes. *The details can be provided via condition.*

With regards the landscape layout, I have no issues. I would however prefer to see more native trees in the planting schedule.