

Summary

There are unlikely to be any significant ecological issues associated with this development.

Bats

The building proposed for demolition was visually assessed for bat roosting potential by a very experienced bat consultant. No evidence of bats was found and the building assessed as having minimal bat roosting potential. I have no reason to disagree with the findings of the assessment, the building based on the photographs clearly very low risk. The proposed single storey extensions do not impact on any areas of the existing building likely to provide potential bat roosting features.

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 demolished has been assessed as negligible 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 during demolition all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed bat worker employed to assess how best to safeguard the bat(s). Natural England should also be informed.

Great Crested Newts

There are ponds to the SE where great crested newts have been recorded in the past, the closest approximately 180m from the development. There is a pond within 50m of the development to the NW and others to the north and west. GCN have not been recorded in these ponds, but the most recent surveys are likely over 15 years old. Colonisation therefore cannot be ruled out.

The development site is however all hardstanding and the scale of the development such that even if great crested newts were present the likelihood of an offence would be low enough that reasonable avoidance measures would be more than adequate. I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any earthworks a reasonable avoidance measures method statement for amphibians shall be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA

Nesting Birds

There is no mention of birds nesting in or on the building to be demolished and the building appears to provide little opportunity for nesting. No trees or shrubs appear to be in the footprint of the development. I am therefore satisfied that the risks are very low of an offence. I 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).

Himalayan Balsam

This species was recorded as present previously as part of application 60686. The current application is however restricted primarily to hardstanding. Species such as Himalayan balsam are included within schedule 9 part 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended. It is an offence to introduce or

cause to grow wild any plant listed under this schedule. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

It is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended to introduce, plant or cause to grow wild any plant listed in Schedule 9 part 2 of the Act. Species such as Himalayan balsam are included within this schedule. If any such species will be disturbed as a result of this development a suitably experienced consultant should be employed to advise on how to avoid an offence.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 174 of the NPPF 2021 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. There appear to be no significant habitat or species loss as a result of this development. Any measures such as a new tree, bird box or bat box would likely enhance the site. Any such requirements can be dealt with via a condition.