

Summary

An ecological assessment (primarily for bats and nesting birds) by a suitably qualified consultant is required in line with the recommendations of the Blackfryers report and our pre-application recommendations of the 2nd September 2019

Ecological Information

The ecological information was supplied previously at the pre-application stage and accepted by my colleague Mandy Elford as an accurate reflection of the further survey requirements on the site. Further survey information does not however appear to have been supplied.

Bats

The 2019 report recommends further bat surveys for the existing building to be restored noting it was high risk. The GMEU agreed with this assessment. No bat report however appears to be present on the web site. Current guidance states it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development is established before the planning permission is granted otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. ***Prior to determination please request a bat and bird survey by a suitably qualified bat consultant of the building to be restored.***

Badgers

My colleague recommend badger surveys prior to any works. I agree with this recommendation. There has never been any record of badgers on this site, but the embankments below the site provide suitable habitat and badgers are present along the metrolink line further south and therefore could theoretically colonise the site. I would therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to commencement of earthworks a survey of the site and within 30m of the earthworks for badger setts will occur and the findings supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA.

Nesting Birds

It appears that some tree and scrub removal will be required and the existing engine shed could also have bird nesting potential, which should be picked up as part of the bat assessment. 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 or building restoration work 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.

Invasive Species

Japanese knotweed was highlighted as present in the 2019 report, there is also a risk of himalayan balsam and giant hogweed, both present nearby along the River Irwell and metrolink corridor and identified just to the south by the EA during pre-commencement surveys for the flood alleviation scheme at Lower Hinds. I therefore recommend that an invasive species survey is carried, preferably prior to determination in order to avoid the need for a pre-commencement condition but alternatively via a condition along the following lines.

Prior to any earthworks a survey for invasive plant species including japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and himalayan balsam will occur and the finding supplied to and agreed in writing to the

LPA. If any invasive species are present a method statement detailing avoidance, control and eradication measures should also be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA, prior to any earthworks.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment and the existing Wildlife Corridor

Section 170 of the NPPF 2019 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The footprint of the development site has generally negligible ecological value but does form part of a wildlife corridor that follows the route of the ELR and Metrolink through the Borough and to Heywood, this section through Bury being a weak point in the corridor. The development therefore provides an opportunity to strengthen the Wildlife Corridor through native planting along the boundaries of the development site and enhancement of the existing habitat to either side of the development platform. Mitigation for loss of bird nesting habitat and potentially bat roosting habitat should also be provided. Given the generally low ecological value of the site and large area of land available to the ELR for mitigation to occur, I am satisfied that the detail can be resolved via a condition along the following lines.

Prior to development an ecological mitigation and enhancement plan including but not restricted to:

- ***Mitigation for loss of trees;***
- ***Mitigation for loss of bird nesting and bat roosting habitat and;***
- ***Demonstrating enhancement of the Wildlife corridor***

Shall be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA

Ecologist

Planning

Planning and Transport

Growth