

Summary

The ecological report is now over 3 years old dating from 2018 and therefore no longer valid. I note that extensive earthworks have also occurred on the site, in close proximity to a great crested newt pond. An offence may therefore have occurred.

Validity of the Ecological Report

The ecological report dates from 2018 current guidance is that reports under 3 years old can be accepted if reviewed, with surveys over 3 years of age requiring a full resurvey. Whilst I would not expect the status of the building proposed for demolition for bats to have significantly changed, barn owls are now known to be present in the general area, with reports coming in of foraging on the fields to the south. The site has also undergone significant change in the vicinity of these buildings (detrimental to wildlife) with trees and shrubs removed.

I therefore recommend that prior to determination a new ecological report is provided with specific reference to bats, barn owl, nesting birds and proximity to a probable great crested newt breeding ponds 50m to the NE. The pond was last surveyed in 2005 so it is possible they are no longer present but the onus is on the developer to demonstrate this.

Earthworks

I note that extensive earthworks are visible on Google Earth to the south of the buildings proposed for demolition. I am unaware whether this is under permitted development rights or that a planning application was submitted on which the GMEU were not consulted.

I would however note that these earthworks are within 20m of the previously recorded great crested newt breeding pond and that a survey should have occurred and if still present the works carried out under license from Natural England whether or not planning permission was required. I recommend the developer takes advice from their ecologist if they have not already, on how to proceed, if further earthworks are required. The Council is aware it should ensure under its biodiversity duty that the site owner complies with the law.

Ecologist

Planning

Planning and Transportation

Place