

Thank you for consulting GMEU on this application at Former Bury Fire Station, The Rock, Bury (72745) for change of use of land to a vehicle storage yard.

No ecological documents such as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) have been provided to assess the value of the site for protected/priority species. However, from a review of aerial photography and Google Street View (dated August 2025), it appears that the site is predominantly hardstanding, although vegetation appears to be colonising the site including small areas of grassland, scattered ruderal vegetation and scrub (such as buddleia) growing through the concrete and at least three trees located towards the south-east/south of the site. The site is also located within a dense urban area. Overall, the site is unlikely to support protected species but if the trees and scrub may have some value for nesting birds.

The following is recommended:

- Protected species can turn up in unexpected places and the granting of planning permission does not negate the need to abide by the laws which are in place to safeguard biodiversity. An informative should be used so that the applicant is aware that they must seek ecological advice should they find or suspect that the proposals will impact on protected species.
- Work that will impact on habitats where nesting birds may be present (for example works to/or removal of trees or scrub), should not be undertaken in the main bird nesting season (March – August) unless suitable checks for active bird nests have been undertaken.
- Planning policy encourages enhancements and net gains for biodiversity to be delivered through the planning system. Wherever possible measures to enhance the site for biodiversity should be secured as part of this planning application, and could include planting of native shrubs and flowering plants.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The Application Form states that the proposal is exempt from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment under the de minimis exemption (less than 25m² of habitat loss). I can see that the existing and proposed plans show that some of the vegetated areas will be retained, namely the patches of grassland. It appears that some areas of scrub will be removed, although this is difficult to quantify. It is less clear whether the three trees will be removed or retained. Any tree loss (even a small tree >7.5cm dbh) has an estimated area habitat of 41 square metres (associated with the root protection zone and canopy), therefore if one small tree is impacted on site, the de minimis exemption cannot be claimed. I am therefore unsure how much vegetation

removal is to take place, particularly as no ecological walkover has been carried out. Bury Council must be satisfied that the proposal meets the de minimis exemption, based on the plans, otherwise a BNG assessment will be required.