

68705 – Nightfreight, Roach Bank Road, Bury

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

I recommend a preliminary ecological assessment of the area of scrub woodland proposed for removal. Potential issues include nesting birds, invasive species and negative impacts to the Gigg Brook and reservoir and how mitigation will be provided for loss scrub and woodland.

Protected Species

Whilst due to my local knowledge, I do not believe there are any protected species issues associated with this development, the proximity to waterbodies and density of vegetation that will require removal means that theoretically protected (and priority species) could utilise the scrub. ***I therefore recommend that prior to determination a preliminary ecological appraisal is carried out and if necessary further more detailed surveys carried out for any species where the consultant identifies a risk.***

Nesting Birds

It is very likely that birds nest in the area proposed for clearance. 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 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.

Mammals and Amphibians

Even if no protected species are present, it is likely that the site provides cover for other wildlife beyond birds, such as hedgehog, common toad etc. If permission was granted, site clearance should be carried out in a way that enables wildlife to move out of the area without being harmed through the use of reasonable avoidance measures during site clearance. The details can likely be conditioned once the PEA has provided an assessment of what if any species are at risk.

Invasive Species

It is very likely that invasive species are present in the scrub woodland given the proximity to a watercourse, in particular Himalayan Balsam and potentially Japanese Knotweed. Control and eradication can be dealt with via condition if such species are proven to be present.

Protection of Gigg Brook (and Reservoir)

I am unclear where surface water will discharge. If the discharge is to the Brook then adequate pollution and silt trap should be installed. The details can be conditioned.

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. The development will result in the loss of approximately 0.09ha of scrub woodland a moderate ecological value habitat and the associated bird nesting opportunities and habitat for any other species identified by the PEA.

Mitigation and enhancement should be provided. At present none appears to be proposed. The simplest option given the lack of available land would be a financial contribution towards habitat

management along the Roch Valley Greenway or to Hollins Vale LNR, both ecological assets nearby. The figure could be calculated through use of the net gain calculator, but assuming the area of woodland lost is accurate a moderate ecological value in poor condition (I have knowledge of this land), in a strategic location (in a wildlife corridor), you are looking at the loss of around 0.5 Biodiversity units, valued currently by the GMCA at £15k per unit. ie A financial contribution of £7.5k to Bury Council via section 106 for habitat management.

Ecologist

GM Ecology Unit