

GMEU response

Summary

The developer's bat consultant identified no significant ecological issues. Issues relating to bats, nesting birds and biodiversity enhancement measures can be resolved via condition and or informative.

Bats

A valid bat report has been provided, this found no evidence of bats and assessed the building to be demolished as having negligible bat roosting potential. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report. The photographs clearly indicating a very low risk building. 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.

Nesting Birds

Google earth indicates that trees and shrubs have already been removed from the site, though trees are still present along the boundary. The new build proposals do not appear to encroach upon these trees, I am therefore satisfied that the risk of disturbance are low. As a precaution I recommend an informative along the following lines.

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 birds nest is suspected work should cease immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the nest(s).

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 site is currently hardstanding and buildings, though until relatively recently there were trees along the frontage. The proposed layout includes small areas of soft landscaping along the frontage and the line of a conifer hedge that has also been removed. I recommend that these species are native and in keeping with the area which includes a good number of beech. In terms of wildlife, no mitigation appears to be required but as enhancement bird boxes could be provided on the existing trees within the wider site. *The biodiversity enhancement details can be conditioned.*