

GMEU response

Summary

An updated ecological report has been provided the site is currently clear of vegetation.

Bats

Trees along the northern boundary were assessed as having bat roost potential in 2019 however these now appear to have been removed, the ecological report noting that only one tree remained in the SW corner of the site which had negligible bat roosting potential. No further information or measures are required.

Nesting Birds

It appears that trees and shrubs have now been removed from the site, suitable habitat is still however present around the boundaries and could be disturbed during any development. 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.

Invasive Species

No invasive species were recorded. The site is however at risk of colonisation with both Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed abundant nearby. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

It is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended to introduce, plant or cause to grow wild any plant listed in Schedule 9 part 2 of the Act. Species such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam are included within this schedule. If any such species will be disturbed as a result of this development a suitably experienced consultant should be employed to advise on how to avoid an offence.

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 site had been previously cleared of natural regeneration and I had accepted the tree planting proposals that related to the previous commercial development. The proposed residential development has more scope for on-site ecological mitigation due to the presence of gardens, with the indicative tree proposals. I have no objection to the proposed landscape plan given the location but would also recommend inclusion of bird and bat boxes provided in-line with the previous proposals, *the details can be conditioned.*