

68691 – Land off Victoria Avenue, Whitefield

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

Further inspection of one tree is recommended prior to determination. The developer's ecological consultant identified no other significant ecological issues. Issues relating to bats, nesting birds, mammals, invasive species and biodiversity enhancement measures can be resolved via condition and or informative.

Bats

The site was assessed for bat roosting potential. One tree, a horse chestnut, was assessed as having low bat roosting potential. The building and all other trees on the site were assessed as negligible risk. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report. Further intrusive investigation is recommended for this tree through tree climbing and use of endoscope. ***I recommend that this occurs prior to determinations.***

Other Protected Species

Whilst species such as badger may forage across the site, it is very unlikely that any other protected species will be negatively effected as a result of the development. No further information is required.

Nesting Birds

The development will result in the loss of trees and scrub, potential bird nesting habitat. 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 other amphibians

Cover for species such as hedgehog a UK Biodiversity Priority Species is present and as noted badger may cross the site. Whilst it is very unlikely that great crested newts are present it also possible that other common amphibian species are present on the site. The consultant has therefore recommended reasonable avoidance measures during site clearance and construction. I agree that such an approach is reasonable. I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to vegetation clearance and earthworks, reasonable avoidance measures method statements to protect mammals such as hedgehog and amphibians during site clearance and construction will be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA

Japanese Knotweed

Species such as Japanese knotweed, recorded on the site, are included within schedule 9 part 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended. It is an offence to introduce or cause to grow wild any plant listed under this schedule. I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any vegetation clearance or earthworks a method statement detailing eradication and/or control measures for Japanese knotweed should be supplied to and agreed in writing to the LPA. The agreed method statement shall be adhered to and implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA.

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 consists of negligible, low and moderate value ecological habitats, all early successional owing to the site having been neglected for a number of years. I was aware of site prior to the closure and demolition of the care centre and willing to regard this as the baseline rather than the current early successional habitats. The main ecological impact is therefore loss of trees and associated bird nesting habitat.

The proposed layout does not indicate any nest boxes and in my opinion insufficient trees to mitigate for the number lost. There is however adequate space on the site for more planting whether standard native trees or boundary native hedge and the potential for integrated bat and bird bricks or boxes on all dwellings as mitigation and enhancement. ***I am therefore satisfied that the details can be conditioned.***

Ecologist

GM Ecology Unit