

Planning application 70269 Stand Cricket Club

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

Potential ecological issues include bats, nesting birds and mitigation for loss of trees.

Bats

At pre-app I recommended a bat assessment if any building demolition or removal of mature trees was to occur. Building works are now however restricted to extensions and refurbishment and whilst trees are to be removed these are relatively low risk based on the arboricultural reports photographs and information.

I am satisfied that all the potential risks are very low.

The extension to the existing club house impacts on one gable, the roof currently profiled metal sheeting as is the soffit. These will provide very poor thermal regulation and be unlikely to be utilised by bats. The two trees proposed for removal are only mature and lack features likely to be utilised by bats and whilst the refurbishment of the scoreboard building may include repairs to the roof these are measures that could occur without the need for planning permission. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines to cover the very low risk that a bat may be found during the works.

Whilst the buildings works have been assessed as very low 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 all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed bat worker employed to assess how best to safeguard the bat(s).

Nesting Birds

The development will result in the loss of several trees, 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.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain

Section 180 of the NPPF 2023 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 two trees and a small area of land. I note that a replacement tree is proposed for the silver birch. I would also recommend a replacement tree for the sycamore is provided. Both trees should be native. I also recommend mitigation for loss of bird nesting habitat through provision of one bird box on a retained tree.

With regards biodiversity net gain, it would appear likely that the development would be exempt as the de minimis threshold currently recommended by defra is 25sqm of vegetation. The development appears to be below this threshold.

Tree planting and bird box details can be conditioned.