

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

Summary

Potential ecological issues include otter, kingfisher, other nesting birds, other wildlife, invasive species and biodiversity net gain.

Protected Species

The site was assessed for all likely protected species. No evidence of any such species was found within areas of land subject to this planning application but evidence of Kingfisher and otter recorded nearby.

There is a risk that the otter could move through the development site during construction. This risk is however low, given the scale of the riparian workings. I recommend that reasonable avoidance measures are applied to the workings associated with the new CSO. (see below for recommended condition).

Nesting Birds and Kingfisher

There will be a loss of scrub associated with the CSO. A kingfisher burrow was located near to the working area. There is a risk that kingfisher will utilise this section of the bank in the future, with an updated survey recommended prior to development. Other birds may nest along the riverbank. I therefore recommend conditions along the following lines is 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.

And

Prior to any earthworks or vegetation clearance an updated survey and precautionary working measures for kingfisher will be provided to and agreed in writing by the LPA. The agreed working measures will be delivered in full.

Other Wildlife

The consultant has noted that the vegetation along the river has the potential to provide cover for other wildlife not just birds. Eg hedgehog and amphibians. Whilst I would agree, the working area is very small and therefore the risks are low. However, when combined with the risk to otter a European protected species, I am satisfied that the cumulative risk is such that a condition along the following lines is reasonable.

Prior to any earthworks or vegetation clearance a reasonable avoidance measures method statement for mammals and amphibians, including but not necessarily restricted to otter and hedgehog, will be provided to and agreed in writing by the LPA

Invasive Species

Japanese knotweed and himalayan balsam are present all along the banks of the River Roch. Eradication would be unreasonable given the extents of adjacent infestation and scale of the site. Biosecurity measures should however be applied to prevent spread off the site. I therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any earthworks and vegetation clearance, biosecurity measures for himalayan balsam and japanese knotweed should be supplied to and agreed in writing to the LPA. The agreed biosecurity measure shall be adhered to and implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA.

Protection of the River Roch

There are risks during construction of the CSO of adverse effects on the River Roch, from sediment release, bank collapse, pollution from machinery and pollution from release of contaminated land in to the river. I therefore recommend that as part of any planning permission a condition along the following lines is applied

No development, site clearance, earth moving shall take place or material or machinery brought on site until a method statement to protect the River Roch from accidental spillages, dust and debris has been supplied to and agreed by the LPA. All measure will be implemented and maintained for the duration of the construction period in accordance with the approved details.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Section 180 of the NPPF 2023 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. 10% BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). I was previously satisfied given the scale of the outfall that restoration could be dealt with via condition. This is still the case but since the previous permission mandatory biodiversity net gain has come in to force. The location of the outfall has triggered the need for a river metric, that cannot be implemented on the site, partly owing to ownership issues and also as the CSO will consist of operational land that cannot be guaranteed for the 30 years required for on-site management.

The units required are however very low in the order of 0.1 BU. I am therefore satisfied that off-site compensation can be acquired and I am already aware that UUL are in discussion with an off-site provider in Yorkshire. Whilst I accept this is not ideal in terms of the LPA, as far as we are aware, there are no habitat banks in Greater Manchester or Lancashire providing river units yet, therefore in my opinion it would be unreasonable for the LPA not to accept that UUL has no option but to divert compensation out of the region.

I am therefore satisfied that the statutory biodiversity condition can be met.

I recommend on-site habitat restoration is conditioned.