

Summary

Potential ecological issues included bats, nesting birds, invasive species and mitigation for loss of vegetation. All risks are however low enough to deal with via condition and informative.

Bats

There are a number of small structures (appear to be three) on the site that could theoretically provide bat roosting habitat, though the nature of the buildings (based on the photographs in the contaminated land report) is such that this risk appears to be negligible for two of them and very low for the breeze block structure. Any roost is also likely to be day roost opportunities for individual bats. We do however know that this is a high risk area for bats, with high value foraging habitat nearby and numerous roosts recorded from the area, from residential properties.

I am however satisfied that given the large number of better roosting opportunities and very low risk nature of the buildings on the site, that an informative along the following lines would suffice.

Whilst the building to be demolished are 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 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

Potential bird nesting habitat is present on the site, in the form of scrub, the hedgerow and various structures on the site. 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 site clearance 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

Sites such as this are moderate risk for Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam. None is however evident on the site photographs or streetview. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines.

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 170 of the NPPF 2019 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 a small area of overgrown land consisting of low and moderate value habitats and associated bird nesting habitat. This will be replaced with a dwelling and garden. Given the very small nature of the site, less than 0.1ha, I would recommend that mitigation in the form of native hedge (hawthorn to match the existing hedge along the frontage and provision of bird boxes on the new build. The details can be conditioned.