

Thank you for consulting the GMEU.

Summary

No ecological issues appear to be associated with this site. Potential issues with bats and nesting birds can be dealt with via informative.

Bats

A valid bat assessment has been provided. No evidence of bats was found and the building assessed as having negligible potential, despite access being possible. The building was not accessible until autumn 2024. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report and would note that the works are primarily internal to the building. As a precaution, I recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Whilst the building to be altered has been assessed as negligible 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

No evidence of birds having nested on the building was recorded. The building has however since last year become accessible to species such as feral pigeon owing to a board having dropped from one of the openings. I therefore recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

The applicant is reminded that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended it is an offence to remove, damage, or destroy the nest of a wild bird, while the nest is in use or being built. Planning consent does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. If a bird's nest is suspected work should cease immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the nest(s).

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

Section 187 of the NPPF 2024 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). The development is restricted to an existing building and developed land. No wildlife issues were identified.

I am satisfied that the development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain under the de minimis rule.

As enhancement I recommend provision of one bat box on the southern or western elevation. *The details can be provided via condition.*