

Bats

An updated bat assessment has been provided. No evidence of bats was recorded and as for previous surveys, the building assessed as having negligible bat roosting potential. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report. As individual bats can turn up in unexpected locations and bats recorded in the locality, I recommend an informative along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Whilst the building to be converted has been assessed as 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

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded. I am satisfied that the building and site are currently very low risk. I recommend as a precaution 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 birds 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 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).

The development will result in the loss of a small area of low value habitat and a couple of small trees. A small amenity space is proposed. The only wildlife issue requiring mitigation is loss of bird nesting opportunities.

A net gain assessment has been provided. This indicates a short fall of 0.05 biodiversity units at the site level to achieve 10% net gain. It does not however take in to account the small amenity area that is proposed which would qualify as vegetated garden. Ie this will be slightly reduced once this habitat is added to habitats created.

In my opinion it should also be feasible to achieve mitigation on site if four or five urban trees are planted around the boundary associated with the car park . Alternatively they may wish to purchase off-site credits, which given the low requirement should not cause any viability issues. The preference would however be for on-site native tree planting around the boundary. Given either option is feasible, I am satisfied that the general biodiversity gain condition will be capable of discharge. If however the developers preferred option is on-site tree planting then the LPA would need to know prior to determination in order to apply an appropriate HMMP condition.

I recommend a house sparrow terrace on a western or eastern elevation of the building as enhancement for wildlife. The final information can be resolved via condition

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Planning and Transportation

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Place

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