

Summary

Whilst the ecological report is generally valid this is effectively the same ecological report as provided for the previous application 68526. An updated badger survey is recommended.

Bats

Bat assessments can occur at any time of year and for trees are best carried out when no leaves are present, so I have no issue with the preliminary bat survey, which assessed the buildings a negligible risk and the majority of the trees as negligible risk with just two trees moderate risk and currently both retained.

With regards bat activity I have no reason to doubt that it is high in this location and the consultant's themselves have assessed the site as being of high value for foraging and commuting bats. We have five bat roost records within 400m of this site. This is therefore a material consideration but given the scale of the site and the availability of similar habitats to west and north its loss is very unlikely to be significant. The general guidance is that bats will commute up to 400m from their roost to for foraging areas but this is more a guide for the level of risk of a property having a roost when deep in an urban area, not the other way around with bats in fact travelling significantly further to forage.

Two trees on the site were assessed as having bat roosting potential by a suitably qualified consultant. Both are currently proposed for retention. As this situation may change I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

The removal of tree called Tree 1 or Tree 2 may have the potential to cause harm to bats as identified in the Ecological Survey and Assessment - ERAP ref. 2021-389b and shall not in any circumstances occur unless further survey information has been provided to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority

The site was also assessed as being potentially important for foraging bats. It is therefore advised that the use of external lighting should retain dark corridors along the edges of the woodland. No external lighting is shown on the proposed plans. *Clarification regarding whether any external lighting is proposed is however recommended.*

Badger

Badger activity was recorded previously but no setts were impacted upon. This report is in my opinion no longer valid given the time that has elapsed and ability of badger to colonise new sites.

I therefore recommend that prior to determination an updated badger survey report is provided.

Nesting Birds

The development would result in the loss of bird nesting habitat including trees, scrub and buildings. 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 or demolition of building commence 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

One species included within schedule 9 part2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), monbretia was recorded. It is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended to introduce, plant or cause to grow wild any plant listed on this schedule. Unlike Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed, this species is not as difficult to control. I would still however recommend the following condition is applied to any permission.

Prior to any earthworks a method statement detailing eradication an/or avoidance measures monbretia should be supplied to and agreed in writing to the LPA. The agreed method statement shall be adhered to and implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA.

Protection of other Wildlife

The site is suitable for hedgehog, which often utilise scrub to nest as well as amphibians and reptiles. Reasonable avoidance measures are recommend under section 5.3.15 of the report. I agree with this recommendation. I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the reasonable avoidance measures for wildlife contained in the Ecological Survey and Assessment - ERAP ref. 2021-389b, Section 5.3.15 as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the LPA prior to determination.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 174 of the NPPF 2021 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. A net gain assessment, I assume based on the new layout, has been provided, but it has not however been properly uploaded to the planning portal with only the front page available. *I therefore request that a copy of the full excel spreadsheet is provided prior to determination.*

David Dutton
Ecologist