

Summary

The developer's ecological consultant identified no significant ecological issues. Clarification on bats and biodiversity enhancement measures are recommended. Issues relating to nesting birds, other wildlife and invasive species can be resolved via condition and/or informative.

Bats

A valid bat report has been provided. This assessed the three buildings that form part of this planning application as having negligible bat roosting potential. Based on the photographs, I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report. All the other buildings on the site were assessed as low or moderate risk with further dusk and dawn surveys recommended. As the building proposed for demolition abuts two other of the buildings assessed as moderate risk, there is the potential to cause an offence during demolition through disturbance of the adjacent buildings. It is however probable that the building can be demolished utilising reasonable avoidance measures eg demolition at a time of year when bats are very unlikely to be present.

I therefore recommend that prior to determination further assessment is provided on the potential to demolish what is called building 3 in the ecological report without disturbing bats in buildings 4 and 5 if present.

The trees on site were not assessed but the current proposal does not appear to result in the loss of any mature trees, therefore no further information or measures are required.

Other Protected Species

No evidence of any other protected species was found and I am satisfied that no further survey is required given the nature of the development. We have no records of great crested newts from the locality with all ponds nearby having been surveyed in the past. We also have no records of reptiles from the locality.

Nesting Birds

The building to be demolished has some bird nesting potential, though no evidence of any barn owl was found. Trees and scrub may also require cutting back. 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 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.

Other Wildlife

Whilst I believe it very unlikely that reptiles or badger will be impacted upon by the development, priority species such as hedgehog and common toad are likely present in the area. Reasonable avoidance measures are therefore justified during demolition and site clearance. I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any earthworks, vegetation clearance or demolition a reasonable avoidance measures method statement for amphibians, reptiles and mammal shall be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA

Invasive Species

Himalayan balsam was recorded near to the building proposed for demolition with Japanese knotweed nearby. Species such as Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed are included within schedule 9 part 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended. It is an offence to introduce or cause to grow wild any plant listed under this schedule.

It would appear that the Japanese knotweed is avoidable, though its exact location is not shown on the plans. I recommend as a precaution a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to any earthworks, vegetation clearance or demolition a method statement detailing eradication or avoidance measures for Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed 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.

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. The building demolition and outbuilding requiring completion, appear to have no permanent impact on vegetated habitats with species impacts limited to loss of potential bird nesting opportunities. It is unclear from the new dwelling what the level of impact will be on the change of use from what is recorded as woodland in the ecological report to domestic curtilage. Whilst no trees appear to be removed, I am assuming ground vegetation will be removed to facilitate access and create a garden, resulting in a net loss of biodiversity. There is however significant habitat to the south that could be enhanced. Species mitigation through provision of bird boxes is viable on site with enhancement for bats also feasible. *Prior to determination, please seek clarification on the landscaping proposals for the new dwelling.*

If as suspected this results in a change of use from woodland to garden, biodiversity mitigation and or compensation should be provided.