

63344 – Land at Ripon Hall Avenue, Ramsbottom

Thank you for consulting the GMEU

Summary

The main body of the site consists of moderate to high value habitats and there will also be potential negative impacts on a grade A SBI, ancient woodland, wildlife corridor and River Valley as defined under the UDP. Further information is required to demonstrate that these negative impacts can be mitigated or compensated for. Other ecological issues include nesting birds, invasive species and mammals.

Protected Species

There is no evidence of direct impacts on any protected species, though the site is potentially utilised as foraging habitat for bats and species such as badger, with sensitive lighting recommended if permission is granted. I have no reason to doubt the findings of the report and agree that sensitive light should occur to prevent illumination of Broad Hey Wood. I recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to development a lighting design strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The strategy shall:

- ***show how and where street lighting will be installed and through appropriate lighting contour plans demonstrated clearly that any impacts on Broadhey Wood are negligible;***
- ***Specify frequency and duration of use.***

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with agreed specifications and locations set out in the strategy.

Proximity to Broad Hey Wood SBI

The development area appears to overlap with SBI, a grade A site and the proposed site layout includes no buffering along the eastern boundary and parts of the southern and western boundary. Parts of Broad Hey Wood are ancient including the land immediately to the south and west. I.e. of National Importance with a presumption against development that would impact on it. The site is also designated as a wildlife corridor and as river valley, with the development lying completely within the latter. The GMEU would object to any direct impact to the SBI or ancient woodland.

Whether this is occurring is currently difficult to determine. ***I would request that the developer provide a site layout map that overlays the SBI, ancient woodland and wildlife corridor boundaries prior to determination.***

We are also object to the current proposed layout (dependent on the map requested above) as no buffer appears to be being provided for parts of the site. Development is right up to the top of the slope to the south with car parking to the edge of the woodland in the east. The Natural buffer noted on the proposed site layout is already part of the SBI. Any buffering should be between the SBI and the development.

Nesting Birds

If approved the development would result in the loss of significant areas of bird nesting habitat. All British birds nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended. I would recommend a condition along the following lines be applied to any permission.

No works to trees or shrubs 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

Two species listed under schedule 9 part 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded on the site. Monbretia and Japanese knotweed. It is an offence to introduce or cause to grow wild any plant listed under this schedule, if permission is granted, I would recommend a condition along the following lines is applied.

Prior to any earthworks a method statement detailing eradication and/or control and/or avoidance measures for Japanese knotweed and 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.

Mammals and Amphibians

Whilst there is no indication that any protected species utilise the site, there is a risk of other priority species such as hedgehog and common toad being present. The consultants recommend standard reasonable avoidance measures, which I support and could be conditioned if permission was granted.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 170 of the NPPF 2018 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The proposed development will result in the loss of around 0.7ha of moderate to high value habitats including marshy grassland, scrub and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Limited mitigation is proposed in the form of a small area of unspecified tree planting. No mitigation is proposed for loss of marshy grassland or bird nesting habitats. As the marshy grassland and woodland would be regarded as high value habitats any mitigation would need to be of an equivalent value. **The GMEU objects to the current proposal as there is no indication that adequate mitigation is or could be provided on site.**

We would expect a Landscape and Ecological Management plan to be produced that demonstrated no nett loss and a commitment to management of any mitigation for a 5-10 year period or a section 106 agreement to provide off-site compensation.

**D Dutton
Ecologist
GM Ecology Unit**