

Memo

To: Joshua Clayman

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 10 August 2023

Re: Planning application ref: 230785

Address: 9a Circuit Lane Reading RG30 3HB

Description: Division of 1 dwelling into 2 dwellings (comprising demolition of extensions to main dwelling) and the erection of 1 additional dwelling

The application site comprises a parcel of land which includes a detached house and outbuilding(s) within the curtilage of 9a Circuit Lane. It is proposed to add a two storey side extension to the house, subdivide the building into two dwellings and erect a further dwelling on the land. The site is located in a residential area of Reading and surrounded by habitat of good wildlife value, including woodland within Devil's Dip Local Wildlife Site (LWS) 60m to the northwest, Circuit Lane allotments directly to the rear and Prospect Park (LWS) 130m north.

This is similar to previous application 221628 [*The alteration of 9a Circuit Lane into 2 dwellings (comprising demolition of extensions to the main dwelling) and the erection of 2 additional dwellings at the surrounding land*] which was refused in part because of a lack of information regarding ecology.

The updated ecology report (Daniel Ahern Ecology, April 2023) concludes that the house, outbuildings and trees on site are unlikely to host roosting bats. The report states that the site is not considered to be suitable for badgers, otters or other protected species. Nonetheless, there is a very small chance that there may be reptiles on site and the vegetation on site is likely to be used by nesting birds. A condition should therefore be set to ensure that a Construction Environment Management Plan for Biodiversity is implemented. Example wording is given below.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The applicant has submitted a screen shot purporting to show that the development will result in a net gain of 59.25% in habitat units which is surprising as this is identical to the previous application which had larger areas of hardstanding. Furthermore, the spreadsheet has not been provided and as such, it is not possible to verify the calculation. The applicant will need to provide an updated calculation (the DEFRA 4 metric should be used as this is a new application) and provide post and pre (baseline) development habitat maps. The baseline should be the site before clearance of the site was undertaken (as shown in the photos in the ecology report)

Biodiversity Enhancements

The Proposed Site Plan Landscaping & Ecology Enhancements (Colony Architects, rev: 791 02-12 a) appears to show one bird box in the middle of a lawn area next to the cycle shed. As per our comments for the previous application (221628), this is not sufficient and revised drawings showing an increased number of bird boxes as well as bat box/brick/tiles should be submitted.

Furthermore, these should be integrated into the buildings because if they are not, over time they will fall off or be removed, and will not provide sustainable long-term habitat for bats or birds. The applicant should provide full details of these or alternatively a condition could be set to ensure that these are provided. Example wording is provided below:

Lighting

No lighting details have been supplied and a condition should be set to ensure no external lighting is installed without the prior approval of the Council. Wording provided below:

Summary

The Biodiversity Net Gain metric spreadsheet should be supplied along associated maps, management plans, habitat condition assessment sheets etc. The applicant should ensure that these match the proposed landscape drawings.

If the above issue can be addressed, subject to the following conditions, there would be no ecological objections to this application.

Conditions:

Condition: No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following.

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
- b) Identification of “biodiversity protection zones”.
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To minimise impacts on biodiversity in accordance with Paragraphs 179 and 180 of the NPPF.

Condition: Prior to the commencement of the development, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include integral bird and bat boxes, tiles or bricks on buildings and native and wildlife friendly landscaping (including gaps at the bases of fences to allow hedgehogs to traverse through the gardens), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved.

Reason: To incorporate biodiversity in and around developments in accordance with paragraph 179 and 180 of the NPPF

Condition: No new exterior lighting is to be installed without the prior written permission of the local planning authority.

Reason: To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on nature conservation in accordance with paragraph 185 of the NPPF and EN12 of the Reading Local Plan.

