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ECOLOGY STATEMENT

Relating to

Outline planning permission for layout and access for 2x two storey, 3 bedroom semi-detached dwellings.

At

**Land Adjacent Mitcham Close
Reading
RG2 0AS**

For

Mapgro Developments Ltd

Ref. 2022.037/Eco_RevA
06 October

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1. Description of existing property and site

- 1.1. The existing property is located within the built-up area of Reading, where residential developments are acceptable. The 557.32m² site is located on the South-West side of Milman Road and is vacant land.
- 1.2. The site has a single point of access, both vehicular and pedestrian access. The access point is located at the West side of the site via Mitcham Close. There are current parking provisions for 3no vehicles and access to a garage at the rear of the site.
- 1.3. The neighbouring properties are set away from the side boundaries.
- 1.4. Parking provisions are generally off-street car parking and in driveways located to the front of properties.

2. Planning

- 2.1. The building is not listed; the property is not within a Conservation Area.

The application (ref. 210661) was given outline approval on 25/07/2021, which consisted of *'outline planning permission for layout and access for 2x two storey, 3 bedroom semi-detached dwellings'*.

3. Report Objectives

- 3.1. Reading Council, have requested the applicant to address Condition no. 22, as follows:

No development shall commence above foundation level until details of biodiversity enhancements, to include four swift bricks or sparrow terraces built into the walls of the new building and wildlife friendly landscape planting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The bricks shall thereafter be installed in accordance with the plans and retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To incorporate and enhance biodiversity in and around the development in accordance with policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

- 3.2. This proposal details the enhancements, location, and rationale behind the citing.
- 3.3. Objectives:
 - 3.3.1. To improve nature conservation value.
 - 3.3.2. To ensure net biodiversity gain during the project implementation

4. Site Enhancements

- 4.1. The Reading Local Plan Policy E12: Biodiversity and the Green Network outline for site enhancements to provide habitat creation and management information, ensuring development contributes to enhancing local biodiversity.

4.2. Habitats

Post construction, lawns will be seeded with a flower rich seed mix such as Emorsgate EL1 Flowering Lawn Mixture supporting species which can tolerate regular mowing such as birds foot trefoil, rough hawkbit, and red clover.

4.3. Bird boxes

Overhanging eaves and gaps under roof tiling are suitable for the breeding of birds. Hedgerows, ornamental shrubs, scattered trees provide suitable nesting habitat for breeding birds. It is essential to carry out works between October and February to avoid birds breeding months. If development commences during the breeding months, workers should scout for possible nests before carrying out any work. In deciding the appropriate location to place bird nests, several factors have been considered among them the species.

- 4.4. Bird boxes are to be built into the walls of the new buildings. The following are proposed:

- 4.4.1. 4 x 'S' Brick boxes from Action for Swifts suitable for swifts *Apus apus* and Section 41 species house sparrow *Passer domesticus*. Nests should be incorporated into the walls of buildings/structures immediately under soffits or eaves at least 5m above the ground. These can be designed to match the specification of any build by using a custom brick facing.

- 4.5. Alternative boxes could be used but these must be confirmed for suitability by an ecologist.

- 4.6. The boxes will not be south facing to avoid chicks overheating and will not be above windows or doors to minimise disturbance to occupants of the houses from noise and droppings.

4.7. Native Planting

There will be short-term impacts of removal of vegetation near the construction site and minimal disturbance to existing trees and shrubs. Planting native vegetation would likely significantly increase nectar and other foraging resources on site for native wildlife, in particular for invertebrates. Aspractical, native trees, shrubs and nectar producing climbing plants will be planted inappropriate areas on site, including along the border fences, increasing the structural diversity of the site and attract a greater number of flying insects upon which bats, birds, and other wildlife feed. New hedgerows will be planted along the road using native hedgerow species. A variety of plants will be planted which provide nectar, berries and nuts at different times of year ensuring continued habitat for wildlife.

4.8. Root balls are generally bigger, heavier, more developed, and bushier than pot plants. Although it takes longer to establish, it is recommended to container grow. The success rate for root balling is not as high, compared to container growth.

4.9. If possible, trees and shrubs of local provenance will be sourced, as these have a better chance of thriving. For bio-security purposes, only UK-grown species will be planted:

4.9.1. *Euonymus europaeus*

4.9.2. *Cornus sanguinea*

4.9.3. Privet hedging

4.9.4. Low level perennials

4.10. Lawn Seed Mixture

4.10.1. All amenity grassland and lawn areas will be seeded with EL1 Flowering Lawn Mixture which contains slow growing grasses with a selection of wildflowers that respond well to regular short mowing. This will provide a valuable resource for bees and other insects, which in turn provide food for other wildlife such as bats and nesting birds.

4.10.2. The area will be seeded in spring or autumn when the conditions in terms of warmth germination. As wildflowers and grass species are perennial, they will be slow to germinate and will usually not flower in the first year.

4.10.3. Throughout the first year the newly sown grassland will be cut regularly to a height of 40-60mm to control annual weeds and help balance the grassland area between the faster growing grasses and slower growing wildflowers.

4.10.4. After the first year the lawns will be mown regularly to a height of about 25-40mm. If desired, the mowing can be paused from late June for 1-2 months to enable flowering. Cuttings to be removed from site.

4.11 Hedgehog access

Western European hedgehog, although not spotted at the site is found in the region. Any fencing provided on the site, either on the site boundaries or between properties, will have access provided in the form of 13cm diameter, semi-circular holes cut at 10m intervals in the base of the fence allowing hedgehogs and other small animals free access. To reduce the likelihood of these holes being closed by future residents, at least two small signs will be put above holes in each garden to inform people of why these holes are there. Recommended signs are:

<https://shop.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/product/hedgehog-highway-sign>.

5. Management

5.1. Hygiene and maintenance

Continuous monitoring of the nests and all the structures under the biodiversity enhancement programme will be necessary to establish whether they are in use. The bird boxes should be installed during autumn. The repair of these facilities should be considered and planned accordingly, when necessary, by a licenced professional.

5.2. Monitoring success

It may take time for bats, birds, or other wildlife to use the facilities provided. Regular monitoring without interference is suggested. Any sign of urine-staining, food remains should be checked. Carry out non-invasive checks regularly by occupiers of the property. No need for opening, however, when necessary, a licenced professional will be required to perform the necessary checks.

6. Relevant Legislation and Policy

6.1. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF2020)

The latest version of the framework is 2021. It seeks to conserve important biodiversity. Besides, the framework promotes biodiversity conservation projects. Developers should carry out biodiversity study and try as much as possible to prevent biodiversity loss.

6.2. Conservation of Habitats and Species regulation 2017

The regulations are because of the translation of The Habitat Directive and Habitats Regulation. European Union Council Directive 92/43/EEC.

The directive guides the issuance of European protected species license. The government can only license for research and education purposes. European protected species include bats, wildcats, otters, beavers, great crested newts among other animals. There exist strict tests. There must be a licensable purpose, satisfactory alternative and the proposed action should not be detrimental to the species.

6.3. Wildlife and countryside act of 1981(as amended)

The act is the primary legislation that protects animals, plants, and habitats in the UK. All wild birds, their eggs and nests are protected with certain exceptions. It is illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or intentionally, damage or destroy their nests or eggs. It is also illegal, to take possession or control of the same. These include both resident and visitor birds to the European territory of any member state. The act excludes game birds which are covered by Game acts. All bats and their habitats are protected. Obstruct roost, kill, and injure bats. One should not introduce invasive species to the habitat.

7. Appendix

7.1. Bird Box



'S' Brick boxes from Action for Swifts

Ends