

Memo

To: Marcie Rejwerska

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 13 May 2024

Re: Application ref: 240415

Address: Land to South Of 104 Berkeley Avenue Reading RG1 6HY

Description: Erection of a detached dwelling with parking and amenity space

The application is for the erection of additional two storey dwelling within the garden / curtilage of 104 Berkeley Avenue. The site is located in a residential area of Reading and adjacent to a green link as per Policy EN12

Biodiversity Net Gain

The site comprises mainly garden with a line of trees/hedge line along the southern boundary of the garden. Although not priority habitats as per the NPPF they do have some ecological value.

Policy EN12 of the Reading Local Plan reads:

On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

Development should:

Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and

Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.

In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development. [...]

To demonstrate compliance with this policy, the applicant will need to provide a biodiversity net gain calculation using the latest DEFRA Metric. The calculation will need to be accompanied by the spreadsheet, as well as maps showing the habitats before and after development. In this case, the site has been cleared and the habitats on site prior to clearance should be used as the baseline for the calculation.

Biodiversity Enhancements

In accordance with paragraph 186 of the NPPF, which states that “*opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged*” a condition should be set to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the new development. This is particularly relevant in this case because of the proximity of the site to a Green Link, woodland associated with the nearby railway line and nearby bat roosts.

Summary

The applicant should be asked to submit a net gain calculation, using the latest DEFRA metric to demonstrate how a net gain in biodiversity units will be achieved.