

Memo

To: Anthony Scholes

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 27 August 2024

Re: Application ref: PL/24/0998

Address: 5 Stoneham Close Tilehurst Reading RG30 4HB

Description: Construction of Two Storey - 3 Bedroom house and demolition of existing garage.

The application site comprises a garden and garage to the rear of 5 Stoneham close where it is proposed to demolish the garage and erect a single house.

The application is similar to application 211184 and 220943, both of which were withdrawn and application 230120 which was refused.

Our response for the application is very similar to our previous responses and is provided below:

The site comprises a building and private garden which forms part of a block of rear gardens which together are likely to be of importance for biodiversity and act as a link between an area deciduous woodland 70m to the south and a Meadway Fringe Local Wildlife Site (90m to the east)

Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the Reading Local Plan reads:

Proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

[.....]

The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network; ...

EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) 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.

Screenshots of a Biodiversity net gain calculation have been submitted. These appear to have been undertaken using the DEFRA 3.1 metric which had a number of issues with it and is now out of date.

Our advice is that it has not been demonstrated that the proposals will not result in a net loss of biodiversity as measured using the Statutory Metric. This is contrary to the policies EN12 and H11 above. To demonstrate compliance with these policies, the applicant will need to submit a net gain calculation, using the Statutory Metric to demonstrate how a net gain in biodiversity units will be achieved. The metric itself will need to be submitted for review.