

Memo

To: Matthew Burns

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 27 August 2024

Re: Application ref: PL/24/0846

Address: Napier Court Napier Road Reading

Description: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of new buildings of 11 and 12 storeys, with amenity space at roof level (part indoor and set back), to provide 576 build to rent residential dwellings (Class C3) with residential amenity space, parking, landscaping and associated engineering works.

The application site comprises an area of hardstanding and buildings/offices just south of Kings Meadow in central Reading. The proposals include redevelopment of the site into a build to rent residential scheme with associated parking, landscaping and amenity space.

The ecology report (FPCR, June 2024) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes that once precautions are in place for nesting birds, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will adversely affect protected species and it is recommended that a condition is set to ensure that the site is not cleared during the bird nesting season (wording below)

Biodiversity Net Gain

This application is subject to mandatory net gain requirements as outlined in Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment was conducted using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, based on the Landscape Reference Plan (Stantec, 2023, RG-LD-200).

The assessment results indicate that a 51.84% net gain in habitats and a 192.41% net gain in hedgerows can be achieved. The baseline habitats appear to have been accurately accounted for in the Metric. Consequently, if planning permission is granted, it will be contingent on meeting the pre-commencement general biodiversity net gain condition. This condition requires the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, demonstrating how a 10% increase in biodiversity value will be achieved for the development.

Biodiversity Enhancements

The ecology report recommends integrated bird and bat boxes are to be included within the new flat blocks – three bat and three bird boxes are recommended for each of the proposed two buildings. However, this is inadequate for a development of this scale. and the applicant is asked to supply details, locations, elevations and specification, for at least 10 of each type of box to be integrated into each of the buildings. The bird boxes should include swift bricks or make use of universal nesting boxes. Should the application be approved, it is recommended that a condition

be set to ensure that full details of these enhancements for wildlife are provided. Alternatively the applicant may wish to provide this information prior to determination of the application to avoid the need for such a condition.

Lighting

The site lies adjacent to a tree lined railway line and within 140m of the River Thames, both of which are of significant value for wildlife and likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats.

Paragraph 191 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on nature conservation.

As such a condition should be set to ensure that a wildlife friendly lighting scheme is provided. This is particularly important along the railway line which should remain dark and unlit. Wording is given below.

Conditions:

Condition: The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until a report detailing the external lighting scheme and how this will not adversely impact upon wildlife has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The report shall include the following figures and appendices:

- A layout plan with beam orientation
- A schedule of equipment
- Measures to avoid glare
- An isolux contour map showing light spillage to 1 lux.

The approved lighting plan shall thereafter be implemented as agreed.

Reason: To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on nature conservation in accordance with para 191 of the NPPF

Condition: All trees, hedges and shrubs or similar vegetation where birds may nest which are to be removed as part of the development, are to be cleared outside the bird-nesting season (mid-March to August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check the areas to be removed immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded no works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until the nest(s) are no longer in use

Reason: To ensure that wildlife is not adversely affected by the proposed development.

Condition: Prior to commencement of the development, full details of biodiversity enhancements, to include ten bird and ten bat boxes, bricks or tiles built into the walls of each of the new buildings shall be submitted and approved in writing by the council. Prior to first occupation of the first dwelling the development shall be inspected by a qualified ecologist and a statement of conformity shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority to confirm whether all of the measures for enhancing biodiversity have been implemented in accordance with the details approved under this condition.

Reason: To incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments in accordance with paragraph 186 of the NPPF