

Memo

To: Anthony Scholes

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 5 November 2024

Re: Planning application ref: PL/24/1425

Address: READING LINK RETAIL PARK, ROSE KILN LANE, READING

Description: Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14 Parts (a) and (b) of application 231077

The application seeks to discharge details Reserved by Conditions 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14 Parts (a) and (b) of application 231077 [Erection of 1,780 sqm unit for use as gym with mezzanine level at Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane]

Condition 10 reads:

No development shall commence on site (including demolition or preparatory works) until details of a habitat enhancement scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme is to include a programme for implementation and ongoing maintenance. The habitat enhancement scheme shall thereafter be implemented and adhered to in accordance with agreed programme.

REASON: Details are required prior to commencement as insufficient information was submitted with the application and in order to avoid harm to habitats and species whilst securing biodiversity enhancement in the long term. This accords with Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2019), Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The applicant has provided a report for a Habitat Enhancement Scheme (Ecology Partnership, September 2024) which includes details of planting and three bird and two bat boxes. However, the bat and bird boxes are not integrated into the new building and no reasons are provided as to why this is the case. The LPA preference is for integrated boxes as non integrated boxes can be removed or fall off over time, while integrated boxes provide long term roosting facilities for birds and bats.

Additionally, section 3.3 of the report states that “To enhance the local bat population and provide roosting opportunities within the site, bat boxes will be incorporated into the proposed development. Woodcrete boxes are recommended as they are breathable and long-lasting. These will be hung along the southwest of the building”

The report later contradicts this, and states that the bat boxes will be “hung on mature trees” or “hung on trees...”. To address these inconsistencies, the report should be updated with clear information regarding box placement and an explanation as to why integrated boxes are not planned for the development.

Furthermore, in a number of places throughout the report, it refers to what “should”, “could” or “can” be done and not what “will” be done. This should be changed so that it is clearly set out what will be done.

Conditions 3, 6, 7, 8, 14 Parts (a) and (b) are not directly related to ecology and there are no ecology related objections to these conditions being discharged.