

Memo

To: Alison Amoah

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 19 November 2024

Re: Planning application ref: PL/24/1244

Address: 37 CHAPEL HILL, TILEHURST, READING, RG31 5BT

Description: Proposed construction of new 4 bed detached house with associated Soft and hard landscaping along with front hard standing for 2 off street car parking

The application site is an area of land previously part of the side garden and parking area of 37 Chapel Hill. The proposal is to erect a new dwelling on this site

Protected Species and priority habitats

The Ecology report (Matthew Game Consultancy, October 2024) has an executive summary that references roosting bats within a building (there is no building on site) and damage to trees (there are no trees on site).

Despite these inaccuracies, it appears unlikely that the scheme will adversely affect protected species or priority habitats. However, the vegetation on site may be used by nesting birds. As such the report, any vegetation clearance undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) to minimise the risk to nesting and roosting birds. Recommendations should be secured through a planning condition – we can provide wording for this once the issues for BNG have been resolved.

Biodiversity Net Gain

As of April 2, 2024, a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a statutory requirement for small sites like this one. Additionally, a net loss of biodiversity would fail to meet the requirements of EN12 of the Reading Local Plan.

The applicant has submitted a BNG calculation and report (Matthew Game Consultancy, October 2024) which concludes that the development will result in a net gain of 0.2 area habitat units (14.87%) and a 16.08% net gain in hedgerow units.

Linear habitat units: The submitted baseline habitat plan within the BNG report does not show any hedgeline and the plan should be updated to show this hedge. The gain in hedgerow units is achieved through the planting of native hedgerow. While the excel metric provided lists as additional one metre length, the report states that 10 linear metres of hedgerow will be planted around the site. This difference may be a simple input error in conversion from kilometre to metres, nevertheless it will need to be corrected and the metric resubmitted. Additionally, the new hedge is not shown on the landscaping plans which should also be updated to show this new hedgeline.

Area habitat units: The net gain in habitat units appears to be incorrectly calculated for the following reason:

(1) the calculation includes four urban trees as part of the habitat creation. This is contrary to metric guidelines which state that trees within private gardens should not be included in the metric: The guidelines read:

“ Where private gardens are created, any tree planting within the created garden should not be included within post-development sheets of the metric. The habitat type ‘Urban – Vegetated garden’ should be used. “

Correcting the spreadsheet to exclude these trees leads to a net loss in biodiversity units of -0.13 (equivalent to -86.94%).

Furthermore, the application does not comply with trading rules and will result in the loss of 0.13 habitat units of Low Distinctness due to the loss of ruderal/ephemeral land.

The applicant is requested to provide an updated, corrected calculation and report addressing the above points and details on how the shortfall in Biodiversity Net Gain will be addressed.