

Memo

To: Anthony Scholes

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 16 January 2025

Re: Planning application ref: PL/24/1520

Address: 300 Brook Drive , Green Park, Reading, RG2 6UU

Description: External refurbishment of an existing office building (Use Class E) including alterations to the main entrance space, elevations, installation of solar photovoltaics (PV) panels and electric vehicle charging points, replacement plant equipment, external lighting, erection of a new cycle store with changing facilities, a new external pergola and associated landscaping works

The application site lies within Green Park, in Reading where it is proposed to refurbish an existing office building, including the addition of a new changing facility and changes to the landscaping including new paths, a performance area and tree planting across the site.

The Ecology report (Greengage, October 2024) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes that the site is of very limited ecological value, and it is considered unlikely that the proposals will adversely affect protected species. Nonetheless, the vegetation may be used by nesting and roosting birds and if removal of such vegetation is required, it is recommended that a condition is set to ensure that the site is not cleared during the bird nesting season.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment has been undertaken (Greengage, October 2024) using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and based on the landscaping documents provided

The assessment results indicate that the development will result in a net gain of +0.84 Area habitat units, equivalent to 14.97% net gain as well as a net gain of 0.03 Hedgerow units (24.51%) . The net gain appears to be mostly achieved through the addition of trees/orchards, wildflower areas and rain gardens.

A copy of the Statutory Metric has now been provided and appears to assess the baseline habitats correctly. As such, it seems very likely that the development will lead to a net gain. Should planning permission be 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 the inclusion of two bird boxes and three bee posts within the site. It appears it is proposed to install the bird boxes on existing trees – this is acceptable given the nature of the existing building and the impracticability of installing them on

the structure itself. However, we would expect a greater number of bird boxes to be installed across the site, together with a small number of bat boxes.

The Landscape Strategy plan shows a green roof which is welcome. However, it is recommended that a biodiverse green roof, rather than a sedum roof, is provided.

Should the application be approved, it is recommended that a condition be set to ensure that full details of these wildlife enhancements are provided (including specification, locations and management details). Wording is provided beneath.

Conditions

Condition: Prior to the completion of works of the development, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include 6 bird and 2 bat boxes on and around the site and native and wildlife friendly shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved. A short letter report stating that the boxes have been installed correctly and as per the approved plan is to be submitted to the Council prior to the completion of the works.

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

Informative:

Please note that this permission is has been granted subject to the statutory condition ("the biodiversity gain condition") that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Failure to submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development is a breach of planning consent and may lead to formal enforcement action being taken that will require all development on site to cease.

You should ensure that works do not commence until Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the council and "the biodiversity gain condition" has been discharged.