

Memo

To: Anthony Scholes

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 27 February 2025

Re: Planning application ref: PL/25/0157

Address: WILLOW BEND, THE WARREN, CAVERSHAM, READING.

Description: Erection of hobby unit, following demolition of existing shed, and demolition of covered walkway.

The application is for the demolition of three structures and erection of a new 'hobby unit' on a strip of land between two houses along the Warren.

The ecology report (Luscina Ecology, November 2024) has been undertaken and concludes that the proposals are unlikely to adversely affect priority habitats or protected species subject to the implementation of mitigation measures within the report. These measures include protection of neighbouring trees, precautions for badgers and nesting birds during development as well as removal of an invasive species (Virginia creeper) and are detailed within the report. These issues can be mitigated for through the production of a Construction Environment Management Plan for Biodiversity (CEMP - biodiversity) which should also include measures to ensure that the River Thames is not adversely affected by the development works.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The Biodiversity Net Gain report concludes that the proposals will lead to a net gain of 0.1 Area habitat units (AHU's) equivalent to a net gain of 10.39%. However, the trading rules are not satisfied due to the loss of 0.01 habitats of medium distinctiveness

Despite this, it seems very likely that the development will lead to an overall net gain. 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.

Lighting

The site lies adjacent to the River Thames and is lined on both sides by a number of mature trees, all 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 and as per the ecology report, a condition should be set to ensure that a wildlife friendly lighting scheme is provided. This is particularly critical along the tree lines and river which should remain dark and unlit.

Summary,

Subject to conditions requiring the production of a CEMP (Biodiversity), a BNG plan, and a wildlife friendly lighting scheme, there would be no ecological objections to this application.

Conditions:

Condition: No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following.

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
- b) Identification of “biodiversity protection zones”.
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
- d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
- e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECow) or similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To minimise impacts on biodiversity in accordance with Chapter 15 of the NPPF.

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 0.5 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

Informative: Please note that this permission 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.