

Memo

To: Anthony Scholes

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 22 April 2025

Re: Planning application ref: PL/25/0273

Address: 23 CHURCH END LANE, TILEHURST, READING, RG30 4XA

Description: Construction of single storey 2 bed dwelling with parking and amenity space

The application is for the erection of a dwelling within the side garden of 23 Church End Lane. The site is located in a residential area of Tilehurst and lies on a green Link as per local policy EN12, which connects Blundells Copse Local Wildlife Site to Louse Hill Copse Local Wildlife Site.

The application is similar to planning application PL/24/1201 [*New single 4 bedroom dwellinghouse with associated off-street parking and amenity landscape works.*] which was withdrawn on 31 October 2024.

This application is for a single detached bungalow with parking spaces and patio with a slightly smaller footprint and the proposals will result in the loss of much of the existing garden.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The proposals are subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. According to the BNG report submitted (ProVision March 2025), the development will result in a net loss of 0.0284 habitat units (equivalent to -48.5%). To achieve the mandatory net gain requirement of 10%, the scheme will require 0.0345 habitat units. As this cannot be achieved on site, the applicant has proposed that these will be purchased through a habitat bank

While the BNG metric indicates a net loss, it is noted that the area affected comprises managed garden lawn which has a limited biodiversity value. However, the proposal still leads to the loss of private garden land within a designated Green Link and would not provide “*biodiversity net gain wherever possible*” as required under Policy H11. Additionally, it does not ‘*maintain, protect, consolidate, extend or enhance*’ the identified Green Network, instead contributing to its fragmentation, contrary to Policy EN12.

As per our previous memo, unless it could be demonstrated that there are suitable alternatives exist, the proposals would not accord with the local Policies H11 and EN12. The Council will need to decide whether the loss of biodiversity associated with the proposal, located on a Green Link is acceptable and appropriate and if so, whether offsite compensation to mitigate this loss is appropriate.

Should the planning officer be minded to approve the planning application, it is recommended the following condition is included on the decision notice, along with an informative reminding the applicant that the development is subject to mandatory BNG requirements. Suggested wording

provided below:

Conditions:

Condition:

Prior to the commencement of the development, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include one integrated bird and one bat box, tile or brick (or universal nest bricks) built into the new building and native and wildlife friendly landscaping (including gaps at the bases of fences to allow hedgehogs to traverse through the gardens), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. A brief letter report confirming that the boxes, bricks or tiles have been installed, including a simple plan showing their location and photographs of the boxes, bricks or tiles in situ, is to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council, prior to occupation of the dwelling

Reason: *To incorporate biodiversity in and around developments in accordance with paragraph 185 and 186 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.