

Memo

To: Marcelina Rejwerska

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 13 October 2025

Re: Planning application ref: PL/25/1324

Address: SPRINGWOOD, THE WARREN, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7TQ

Description: Erection of extensions and outdoor seating area

The application site comprises a detached dwelling with garden along the Warren in Caversham, Reading. The site is located on the banks of the river Thames (a priority habitat) and is surrounded by habitat of high potential for commuting and foraging bats including The Thames, neighbouring large gardens lined with hedges and trees, woodland within The Warren Woodlands complex (a Local Wildlife Site) less than 5m metres to the north.

The proposals include extensions to the existing building and an outdoor seating area close to the house. A previous application for the site PL/24/1281 [*Erection of a two-storey rear extension to include a first floor balcony, extension of the eastern single storey area, a front two storey extension on the existing porch, and an upward extension of the existing western extension as well as alterations to the hard and soft landscaping*] was refused in February 2025 for a number of reasons including impacts on ecology

Effects of development on wildlife

The Ecology Report (ROAVR Group, July 2024 updated August 2025) concludes that the proposals are unlikely to directly affect protected species such as bats. However, there are likely to be nesting birds on site as well as the nesting geese recorded at the bottom of the garden and the site could be traversed or used as a foraging resource by a range of protected and priority species including otter, water vole, badger, as well as bats. Other risks of the proposed development to priority habitats ie the River Thames and protected wildlife include:

- Pollution (including surface water runoff, dust, noise, littering etc.) during and after construction works
- Excessive illumination by new external lighting impacting the river Thames and other wildlife-sensitive areas
- Disturbance or damage to wildlife resting places, such as those of water fowl (as per the ecology report)

Without mitigation, the above risks would lead to a deterioration in the quality of the Priority Habitat River Thames and a loss of biodiversity. As such, should the application be approved, all works will need to be undertaken in accordance with an approved under a comprehensive

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for biodiversity which details measures to protect wildlife and the river Thams during and after construction. This could be secured via a planning condition.

The River Thames and Biodiversity

The River Thames is a habitat of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and is listed under s41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. It is a 'priority habitat' as defined in the NPPF. Paragraph 179 of the NPPF states that plans should safeguard and enhance "wildlife corridors" and "ecological networks", which in this case, include the River Thames.

Furthermore, EN11: (WATERSPACES) of the Reading Local Plan reads

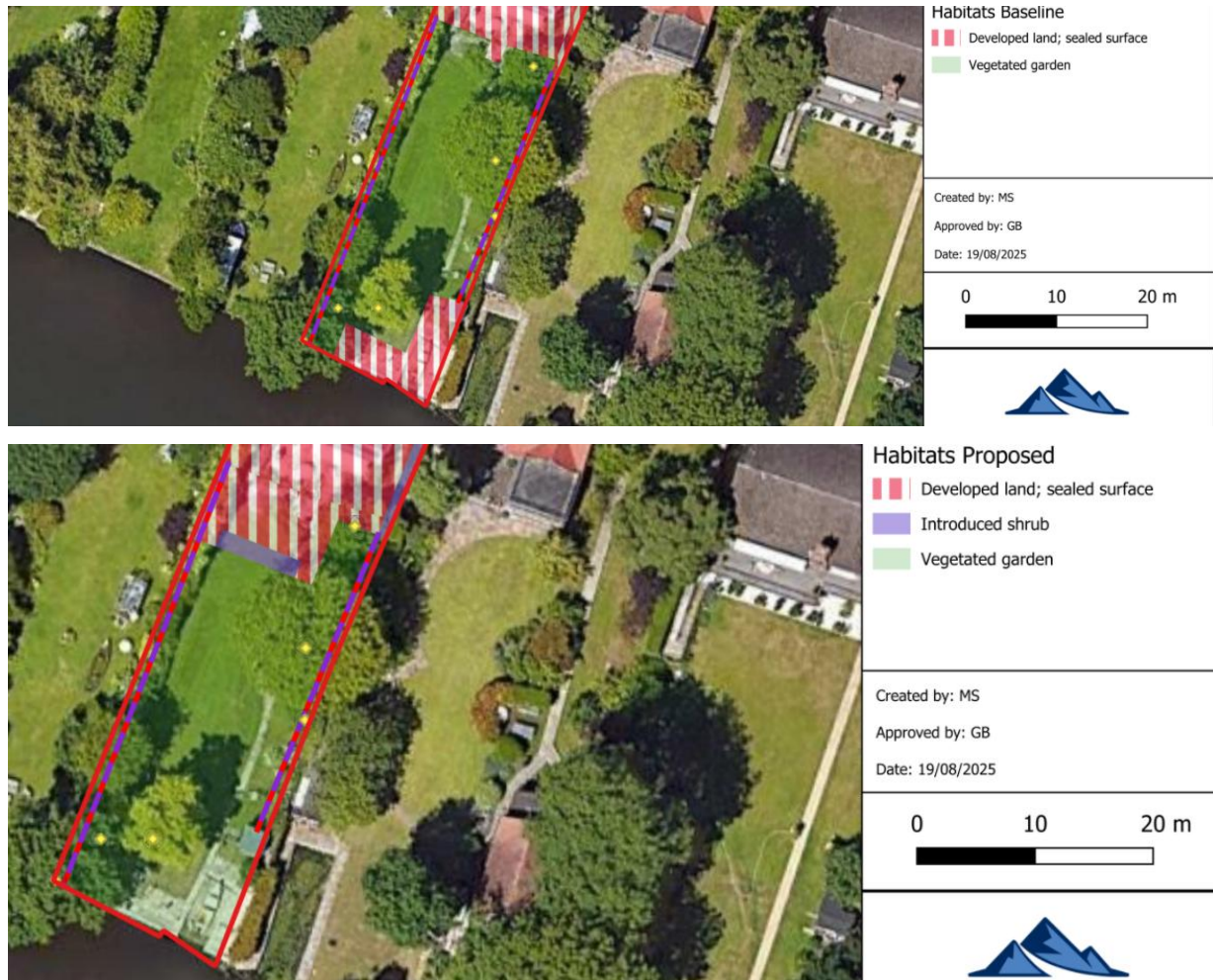
Reading's waterspaces will be protected and enhanced, so that they can continue to contribute to local and regional biodiversity and ecology, flood mitigation, local character, heritage and visual amenity, the provision of accessible leisure and recreational opportunities and, where appropriate, navigation. There will be no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor.

Where development in the vicinity of watercourses is acceptable, it will:-

- *Provide appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces and routes to the watercourse, including through creating or enhancing views of the watercourse, and create a high quality public realm;*
- *Make positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, historic significance, landscape and amenity of the watercourses;*
- *Provide a strengthened role for watercourses as important landscape features, wildlife corridors, historic features and recreation opportunities;*
- *Wherever practical and consistent with its biodiversity role, provide good, level access to and along the waterside for all those who want to use it;*
- *Be set at least ten metres back from the watercourse wherever practicable and appropriate to protect its biodiversity significance;*
- *Improve the quality of watercourse environment through protecting and enhancing habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban uses; and [...]*

Policy EN11 therefore requires a minimum 10m wide undeveloped buffer zone measured from the bank top to the edge of a new development. This zone should be free of hardstanding, formal footpaths, fencing, formal landscaping and lighting.

Our comments for the earlier application were that the plans did not comply with this policy, as they included development involving the features listed above adjacent to the River Thames. The updated scheme appears to have addressed these issues. However, it is unclear what is proposed for the hardstanding at the very bottom of the garden, as this area appears to be shown as vegetated garden in the post-development plan of the report:



This will need to be clarified. Any changes in this area will require consultation with the Environment Agency (if this has not as yet taken place)

EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) reads:

On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should:

- * Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and*
- * Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.*

Previous plans did not demonstrate how the development will enhance the wildlife corridor or achieve a net gain for biodiversity and instead introduced measures that would potentially harm local wildlife and reduce the ecological status of the river.

Subject to the comments beneath, our objection may or may not have been overcome by the applicant. A reduced area of hardstanding is proposed in the garden and the ecology report states “the scheme will deliver new ecologically valuable habitats, including extending areas of grassland and creating species-rich soft landscaping and native planting designed to support pollinators”

No details however of how this will be delivered appear to have been provided. The only plan showing planting details is provided in a file entitled “London landscape 1” which has been incorrectly titled as a “Private villa” in “London” (furthermore no key has been provided) This file

will need to be corrected and updated clearly show the proposed enhancements set out in the ecology report.

Lighting

Artificial light can negatively impact wildlife, especially when it illuminates a watercourse. The proposed development includes a significantly greater window area; however the windows are situated over 20 meters from the river which will minimise their impact on the watercourse. Nonetheless paragraph 191 of the NPPF stipulates that planning decisions should:

"limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation."

Therefore, it is recommended that a planning condition be imposed to ensure that no new lighting is installed without the prior written approval of the LPA.