

Memo

To: Matthew Burns
From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)
CC:
Date: 27 November 2023
Re: Planning application ref: 231266
Address: 136-137 Friar Street Reading RG1 1EX

Description: The demolition of the rear part of building, retention of front facade and roof plane, and construction of a five storey rear extension and dormer windows to retained front roof plane to accommodate a Class C1 use apart-hotel, along with the retention of the ground floor Class E commercial, business and service use.

The application site comprises a building in central Reading where it is proposed to construct a five-storey building (hotel) to the rear and add dormer windows to the front of the building.

The Bat Survey letter report (The Ecology Co-op, May 2023) concludes that the buildings are unlikely to host roosting bats. As such, since the proposals are unlikely to affect bats or other protected species, there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

However, in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF, which states that “*opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged*” it is recommended that a condition is set to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the new development. The plans show an area of green roof and ‘garden deck’. Full details of the planting in these areas (which should be native and wildlife friendly) should be provided along with details of other enhancements such as bat and bird nesting features. These should be integrated into the walls/roof of the new development and include swift bricks (there is a colony of swifts in this part of Reading) Alternatively, the applicant may wish to provide this information prior to determination of the application to negate the need for such a condition.

The site comprises a large area of hardstanding and buildings with virtually no wildlife value. Policy EN12 reads “*On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity*” and as the proposals will result in some new planting, there will be a net gain in habitat units and the applicant would not need to submit a Biodiversity Net Gain Calculator to demonstrate this.