

Memo

To: Catrin Davies

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 8 December 2025

Re: Planning application ref: PL/25/1307

Address: HAWK COTTAGES, SILVER STREET, READING

Description: Detached single storey dwelling with private amenity space

The application site is a small area of land lying to the east of a short terrace of houses in an urban area of Reading. It is proposed to erect a new single storey dwelling with small garden.

Ecology Issues

The site appears to be currently predominantly hardstanding and building with some vegetation to the north of the site and bamboo/fir hedging to the east. It appears that this vegetation may be removed as part of the development. As this vegetation may provide nesting opportunities for birds, there is a risk that birds could be present during clearance works and as such an informative should be included on the decision notice - wording is provided below.

Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Policy

The site currently comprises predominantly hardstanding and building and as such the proposals would not be subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. Local policy EN12 states that development proposals should not lead to any net loss of biodiversity and that where possible, development provide a net biodiversity gain.

The applicant has submitted landscaping plans which show a small area of private amenity space to the south west of the site with two trees, and some areas of soft landscaping although no detailed planting schedule has been submitted – this should be secured via the standard landscaping condition. The plans also include a green roof across the entire dwelling which is welcomed and it is recommended that a biodiverse green roof is provided rather than other green roof types as this will deliver greater biodiversity benefits.

The applicant will need to supply a letter or report from an architect or structural engineer confirming that the building can support the proposed green roof. The council needs to be confident that the green roof can actually be installed as proposed and deliver the intended biodiversity benefits.

Details of green roof maintenance will also be required.

These details can be secured by condition, example wording is provided below

Other biodiversity enhancements

In line with paragraph 193 of the NPPF, which states that “opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”, it would be appropriate to include a condition to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the new development. Example wording is given below. It is noted that the building is only one storey however, it may be possible to install bat and bird boxes within the timber screen shown on the plan. If this is not feasible alternative external locations should be explored.

Conditions:

Condition: Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the biodiverse green roof proposed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include:

- a) A detailed specification of the green roof system, including substrate depth, planting plans and long term maintenance schedule
- b) A report from a structural engineer confirming that the roof structure has been designed and constructed to safely accommodate all the approved green roof system

The roof shall thereafter be installed and maintained in accordance with the approved plans unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: This condition will result in biodiversity improvements in and around the development in accordance with Paragraph 193 of the NPPF and Policy EN12, and to ensure that the roof structure is adequate to safely support the green roof.

Condition: Prior to the commencement of works, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include a minimum of one bat box and one bird box built into or around the new building and native and wildlife friendly landscaping (including gaps at the bases of fencing to allow hedgehogs to traverse through the gardens), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved and prior to occupation of the development a letter report from a suitably qualified ecologist with photos of the bat and bird boxes/bricks in situ shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council.

Reason: To incorporate biodiversity in and around developments in accordance with paragraph 193 of the NPPF

Informative: All birds, their nests and eggs, are protected by law. It is a criminal offence (with certain exemptions) to deliberately or recklessly take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built. The vegetation on the site is likely to be used by nesting birds and any works to buildings with bird nests or vegetation clearance should take place outside the bird nesting season (March - August inclusive). If this is not practicable areas to be cleared should first be checked for bird nests by an appropriately qualified person. If bird nests are found works that could disturb it must stop until any young have fledged the nest.

Landscaping condition L1