

Memo

To: Catrin Davies

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 17 November 2025

Re: Planning application ref: PL/25/1471

Address: Land Adjacent 1 New Road, Reading, RG1 5JD

Description: Self build development for one detached dwelling with associated hard and soft landscaping, new gates, parking and bin and cycle store

The application site is an area of land close to the Reading University grounds where it is proposed to erect a detached dwelling. The site lies on a Green Link as per Policy EN12 of the Reading Local Plan

Biodiversity Net Gain

From 2024, it is a legal requirement under the Environment Act 2021 that all developments (unless exempt) must demonstrate a net gain of at least 10%. The application forms claims that the new house will be a 'self build' construction and as such is exempt from this requirement.

Regardless of the exemption, the site is on a Green Link and the development is subject to local planning policy EN12 which reads:

"On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity"

[...]

"In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is "no net loss" of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development."

The baseline habitats (predominantly garden) appear to be of relatively low ecological value, however they will be lost to accommodate the proposed building footprint. As such, the applicant is asked to submit a BNG metric that shows how the development will not result in a "net loss of biodiversity". The calculation will need to be accompanied by the spreadsheet, as well as maps showing the habitats before and after development. At present, this information has not been provided and therefore it has not been demonstrated that the proposals comply with policy EN12.

Furthermore, the application is accompanied by an Ecology Report (Arbtech, 2023). The report concludes that the site is not suitable for bats, reptiles, great crested newt, badgers or other

protected species. Habitats on site comprise predominantly amenity grassland and scattered trees. However as the report is over 2 years old, an updated walkover ecological assessment will need to be submitted.

Biodiversity Enhancements

The site lies within a green link as per policy EN12 which states:

[...] 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.[...]

As such we will require details of integrated bat and bird boxes and native and wildlife friendly planting. This information can be submitted prior to the determination of the application or secured by condition.

A Sedum roof is proposed across the flat roofed rear extension – full details of the planting, maintenance schedules will need to be provided – again this can be submitted prior to determination of the application or secured by condition.

Summary

The applicant will need to provide details that show that the proposals comply with Policy EN12, currently this information has not been provided