

Memo

To: Catrin Davies
From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)
CC:
Date: 31 December 2025
Re: Planning application ref: PL/25/1721
Address: 362, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1AQ
Description: Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of application PL/22/0776 Allowed by Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/22/3310834

The application is for discharge of condition Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of application PL/22/0776 [*Erection of a mixed-use development comprising of two commercial units on the ground floor (157.5 sqm), 26 residential units, associated landscaping, car and cycle parking.*]

Condition 3 reads:

Prior to commencement of development, a comprehensive scheme of hard and soft landscaping reflecting the principles of the Natural Environment Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include:

- a. Means of enclosure (including mammal gaps where appropriate), car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;*
- b. Hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and other ancillary structures (e.g. furniture, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc);*
- c. Soft landscaping to include a planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), tree pit specifications, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable;*
- d. Full detail of the approved green walls as identified on the Natural Environment Plan, specifying species type, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of individual specimens to form the green wall;*
- e. A landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas including the green wall;*
- f. Routes and details of proposed and existing functional services above and below ground including foul and surface water drainage, soakaways and SUDs details, power, communications cables and water and gas supply pipelines, including access points*

The approved hard and soft landscaping scheme shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing, no later than during the first planting season following the date when the development hereby permitted is ready for occupation. Any trees, plants or parts of the green walls which, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

I note Sarah has already made comments on this condition with which we are in full agreement. The condition should not be discharged until all these comments have been addressed and the required information provided.

Condition 4:

(As the habitat enhancement proposals required under Condition 4 are dependent on the landscaping details required under Condition 3 above, Condition 4 should not be discharged until the above issues have been resolved. In addition, the issues listed beneath will also need to be addressed.)

Condition 4 reads:

Prior to commencement of development (including demolition or preparatory works), details of a habitat enhancement scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme is to include a programme for implementation and ongoing maintenance. The habitat enhancement scheme shall thereafter be implemented prior to first occupation and adhered to in accordance with agreed programme.

It appears the applicant wishes to discharge this condition with Section 5 of the Method statement provided in the document entitled “Arboricultural and Ecological Method Statement “(November 2025, UK Bauhaus Ltd).

In our opinion, this information provided in this document is lacking and insufficient to discharge the condition – see below:

Bat and Bird Boxes:

The Method statement reads:

Installation of bat boxes (Schwegler 2F) and bird boxes (1B and 1SP) on retained trees and new buildings

This seems somewhat incorrect as there are no retained trees.

With regards to the bat and bird box proposals, all bat and bird boxes need to be integrated into the new buildings in accordance with best practice guidance including British Standards 42021:2022 (*Integral nest boxes – selection and installation for new developments*) .

This along with guidance from the RSPB, recommends one bird box per dwelling (e.g. swift bricks, sparrow terraces), ideally in clusters. For flats (ie development such as this one) a reduced ratio is acceptable but for a development of this size our expectations are for a minimum of 13 bird boxes and 5 bat boxes.

Bird roosting provision should focus on swifts which are a declining species in Reading and are present in this area.

Full specifications, numbers of features and technical details of all integrated bat and bird boxes will need to be provided including manufacturer/model, installation details, and a plan showing locations, heights and orientation. Currently none of these details are provided – furthermore hat has been provided does not agree across the documents (: the Landscape plan shows wooden bird boxes designed to be attached to a wall or trees while the ecological information references different box types) Regardless, externally mounted boxes such as these are not acceptable as

they are not integrated and therefore will fall off or be removed and will not provide sustainable long term habitats for birds and bats.

The condition should not be discharged until integral bird and bat boxes have been specified and details above have been provided. These details must include plans showing locations, elevations and sections through the wall so that the council can be satisfied that the boxes can be installed and function as intended

Green Roof Proposals

Page 2 of the Landscaping plan shows green roofs across the building. It is not however, clear what types of green roof is proposed, and we would need confirmation of this along with details of substrate depth, planting and maintenance details. This information is required as highlighted in Sarah's comments, but needs to also be provided as part of the habitat enhancement scheme condition.

Native Species planting

The Arboricultural and Ecological Method Statement states that native species will be planted including:

hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, viburnum, and holly

Please can the applicant indicated on the plans where these will be planted as currently these species are not shown on the landscaping plans

Biodiversity Gain claim

The report concludes that :

With implementation of the protective and enhancement measures outlined, the scheme will deliver measurable biodiversity gain and meet the requirements of Conditions 4 and 8 of the planning approval

However, given that the current plans showing incorrect species/species 'TBC', along with inconsistent proposals, this claim is not supported. It would therefore be impossible to demonstrate biodiversity gain without finalised species and confirmation of the planting details.

Summary

The submitted information is insufficient to discharge Conditions 4 or 3.

The habitat enhancement proposals for Condition 4 are dependent on the landscaping details (condition 3) which have not been provided to an adequate standard. In addition, the submitted documents lack clarity and do not align with one another, the landscaping plan is poorly prepared and includes numerous typos (eg: . "Stakes should be no giher than onthirs"), factual inaccuracies (for example references to retained trees, a claim of biodiversity gain etc), and inappropriate photographs that are unrelated to the proposals.

Conditions 3 and 4 should therefore not be discharged.

Conditions 5, 6, 7 and 8 are unrelated to ecology and there are no ecological objections to these conditions being discharged