

Memo

To: Catrin Davies

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 20 April 2026

Re: Planning application ref: PL/26/0305

Address: 40 HEROES WALK, READING, RG2 8TY

Description: Erection of detached dwelling on land adjacent to 40 Heroes Walk following alterations to the existing dwelling

The application site is an area of land owned partly by the applicant and partly by RBC. The proposals include the erection of a detached dwelling house with garden. The site lies on a Green Link as per Local Plan Policy EN12

Effect of development on Wildlife

The ecology report (Noa Girdler, September 2025) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes the development is unlikely to affect protected species or priority habitats. However, the bramble and other vegetated areas, are likely to be used by nesting birds and a condition to ensure that nesting birds are not adversely affected by the development should be added to the decision notice - example wording for such a condition is provided below.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application is subject to mandatory net gain requirements as outlined in Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment and report (Noa Girdler, Feb 2026) has been submitted using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and based on the Outline Landscaping Plan provided (WDC, drawing no: 24/07/05).

The area baseline habitats appear to have been accurately accounted for in the metric and the metric calculation shows the proposals will lead to a loss of 0.04 Area habitat units (AHU) (bramble scrub). As such, a minimum of 0.05 AHU will therefore need to be secured as off site compensation.

The applicant has also provided a letter suggesting that these units may be available to reserve although no specific site/habitat bank has been identified. The 0.05 units will need to be secured through the BNG condition - where possible these units should be secured from locations as close to the application site as possible to support local biodiversity value.

Enhancements include on site areas of shrub planting, grassland and a tree to the front of the building. The applicant is also proposing to plant three new native broadleaved trees within the amenity strip on the western side of the new dwelling - these are (correctly) not included in the

metric. These trees can be secured through the standard landscaping condition. These are referred to as specimen trees within the planning statement but ultimately, we would want these to be native and wildlife friendly.

Biodiversity Enhancements

In accordance with paragraph 193 of the NPPF (2024), 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” we would expect to see enhancements for wildlife provided within the new development.

The elevation plans show surface mounted bat and bird boxes. While the numbers are acceptable, these should be integrated into the walls of the building because if they are not over time they will fall off or be removed and will not provide sustainable long term habitat for birds and bats. An updated plan including specifications should be submitted, alternatively the enhancements can be secured by condition.

Conclusion

The proposals are acceptable from an ecology point of view subject to the following conditions:

Condition: All trees, hedges and shrubs or similar vegetation where birds may nest which are to be removed as part of the development, are to be cleared outside the bird-nesting season (mid-March to August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check the areas to be removed immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded no works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until the nest(s) are no longer in use

Reason: To ensure that wildlife is not adversely affected by the proposed development.

Standard Landscaping condition: L1 – small scale

Informative: Please note that this permission has been granted subject to the statutory condition ("the biodiversity gain condition") that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Failure to submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development is a breach of planning consent and may lead to formal enforcement action being taken that will require all development on site to cease.

You should ensure that works do not commence until Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the council and "the biodiversity gain condition" has been discharged.