

Memo

To: Marcelina Rejwerska

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 31 July 2026

Re: Planning application ref: PL/26/0923

Address: 146 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, READING, RG1 2RD

Description: The extension and refurbishment of an existing Listed house. New off street parking and external landscaping

The application site comprises a mid terrace listed building in a residential area in the middle of Reading. It is proposed to refurbish the house and add a parking area at the front of the house.

The applicant has submitted an ecology report from 2025 (Arbtech, April 2025) and the results of three dusk emergence surveys also carried out in 2025 (Arbtech, July 2025). The emergence surveys were carried out in June and July 2025. Whilst no bats were seen to emerge from the building, the report itself recommends that should works commence after May 2026, an updated inspection and dusk emergence survey should be undertaken to confirm the roost status remains as originally reported. As the proposed development is now more than one bat activity season after the original surveys were undertaken, updated bat survey information will need to be submitted before the application is determined to demonstrate that the conclusions of the previous surveys remain valid.

Local Policy (Biodiversity)

Policy EN12 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 reads:

a) The identified Green Network, the key elements of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects the sites with identified interest or fragments the overall network. The Green Network comprises:

- *Sites with identified biodiversity interest - Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, protected and priority species and their habitats, Priority and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal); and*

- *Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together – designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links.*

New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should

be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network. All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map.

b) 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.*

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 submitted site plan appears to be very similar to previously submitted although it is noted that the office building in the rear garden has been omitted from the plans therefore leading to a smaller biodiversity loss in the rear garden. This is welcomed, however, the proposals to the front garden appear identical to the previous application and will lead to a loss of most of the front garden and trees within it. Our concerns regarding loss of biodiversity therefore still remain and whilst the proposal are exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, the scheme would still need to show compliance with Local Plan Policy EN12. An assessment of the degree of biodiversity loss has still not been provided and it is not possible to assess the extent of biodiversity loss and compliance with EN12. As such, an assessment of the biodiversity impacts together with the baseline habitat information and proposed landscaping plans should be submitted.