

Memo

To: Jonathan Markwell

From: Cathy Holwill (RBC Ecology Consultations)

CC:

Date: 29 September 2026

Re: Planning application ref: PL/26/1121

Address: 138-141, 142-143 & 144 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EX

Description: 138-141, 142-143 & 144 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EX Phased redevelopment of the site involving the demolition of No's 138-141 & 142-143 Friar Street, partial demolition of No. 144 Friar Street and erection of a basement, 6-storey and rooftop plant building for purpose-built shared living accommodation (co-living) (Sui Generis), together with the partial retention of No. 144 Friar Street for flexible Class E(a)-E(e) uses

The application is for a revised development scheme at 138 to 144 Friar Street located in a built up centre of Reading. The site comprises several adjoining buildings within Reading town centre and the proposal seeks to redevelop the site to deliver 145 co-living units following the demolition of numbers 138-141 & 142-143 and the partial demolition of the Bugle Pub (144) – although this is referred to as partial retention and will be converted to commercial use.

Effect of development on Wildlife.

The Ecology report (Bracken and Wild, July 2026, ref: 04072026/01) concludes that the site is of negligible habitat value as it comprises building and hardstanding only.

Nonetheless, the report concludes that the buildings offer potential for bats and nesting birds and therefore includes results of internal and external inspections of the buildings

Bats:

Buildings B2a (render building numbers 143- 142) and B3a (former Bugle) were both assessed as having moderate potential to host roosting bats. B3a in particular has been identified as having numerous potential roosting features and possible hibernation potential. As such, the report concludes that further survey is required (including a further internal inspection survey of B3a)

These surveys are required to establish whether bat roosts are present within the buildings. In the absence of the information from these surveys it is not possible to establish whether bat roost are present on site. Should a bat roost be present, an assessment of the impacts of the proposed works will need to be provided together with details of mitigation and licencing requirements.

The results from the recommended surveys (and internal inspection) will therefore need to be submitted prior to determination of the application.

Swifts:

The ecology report itself recognises a high presence of swifts in the area and states that there is potential for swifts to nest within the existing buildings. Given that these buildings will be demolished/redeveloped, further assessment to establish whether the buildings support established swift nesting sites should be provided. If these are present, they will be destroyed during development works and as such, details from this assessment should be used to establish appropriate nesting features for swifts. Currently the requirement for a pre commencement nesting check by a SQE would only identify active nests at the time of the works and would not establish whether the building supports established swift nesting features (which would be lost).

Biodiversity Enhancements

The ecology report recommends bird nesting and bat roosting provision to be incorporated into the development. Full details of this provision should be provided with the number, locations, elevations and specifications informed by the results of surveys and in line with British Standard BS 42021:2022 (*Integral nest boxes - selection and installation for new developments – specification*). Monitoring arrangements should also be outlined as per BS 42021:2022.

The ecology report also recommends “Green/brown roof provision, as encouraged by the LPA,...” and indeed this contributes significantly to the claimed Urban Greening Factor calculation provided. A separate document “P21109-FCH-XX-RF-DR-A-1306-P19-Proposed Roof Plan” shows an extensive Green roof of 308m². This is later described in the DAS as an intensive or biodiversity green roof.

Detailed planting plans will need to be submitted for all proposed landscaping. Given the scale of the development, and as per policy EN12, the plant species selected should be predominantly native and wildlife friendly to provide a greater local biodiversity benefit.

Full planting details, including specifications for courtyard planting, new trees, green/intensive/biodiverse roof etc will need to be provided. In relation to the proposed “green roof”, these plans will need to be accompanied by cross sectional plans of the roofs, with confirmation from an architect or structural engineer confirming that the buildings can structurally support the green roof. The council needs to be confident that the proposed landscaping on the roofs are structurally feasible and can be effectively implemented.

Page 57 of the DAS refers to the following document: 26029-EXA-ZZ-00-DR-L-00101 although this does not appear to have been submitted. This document should be provided to allow the assessment of the proposed landscaping as well as the long term management.

The planning statement refers to the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) and emphasises the importance of the courtyard landscaping and the green roof in achieving the required UGF value of 0.25. As such it is all the more important that the detailed landscape proposals are supplied and can be assessed to ensure that these are achievable.

Other matters

There appear to be a number of errors in the ecology report including incomplete Contents references and a reference to an appendix that doesn't exist. A revised final report should be provided that corrects these errors and includes the results of the outstanding bat surveys and inspection as well as an assessment of swift nesting sites. These can be used to inform any resulting changes to the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures.

A detailed lighting strategy has not been provided and if necessary any details of wildlife sensitive lighting could be secured by condition.