

PLANNING REF : 242484
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 17 Arborfield Rd
: Shinfield
: RG2 9DY
SUBMITTED BY : Dr Stephanie Bird
DATE SUBMITTED : 18/05/2025

COMMENTS:

I am writing to object to planning application 242484 for a number of reasons.

1. The applicants, Bellway and the University of Reading, have a history of not fulfilling planning obligations, in fact a case in point is the development South of Cutbush Lane, immediately to the North of the proposed development. An example is that this plan included a playground that despite now being open is not fit for purpose; the toddler/young child section is only fenced on one side, with a three wire barrier (perimeter of three wires strung together between posts) for the remaining sides. This is not safe; it does not prevent the entry of dogs who are free to enter and foul the playground, it also poses no obstacle to toddlers within the playground leaving and yet does prevent their supervising adults from catching and returning them to safety (especially if they are being looked after by older relatives, or are pregnant (as I am) and not easily able to climb through the wire barrier). I do not think the applicants should be awarded further planning applications until they have fully discharged all of the obligations stipulated in their current/past developments.

2. Proposal 242484 has an entrance junction situated on Arborfield Rd into the proposed development. This will create a route through residential roads for cars to use rather than the Eastern Relief Road. Instead access should be provided off of the relief road, this will a) prevent the creation of a rat run (Hawthorn - Shepherds rd - Arborfield rd) and b) negate the removal of an established hedge boundary that was found in the ecological surveys to provide forage and habitat for bats. The proposed junction would also come with additional street lighting, for obvious safety reasons, but which would further degrade the habitat for bats and other protected animal species - I am an entomologist and have observed stag beetles flying and mating at the Arborfield Rd allotment site - these will be using the hedging as habitat and a movement corridor alongside the bats. Maintaining the integrity of this hedge would be a vast improvement to the application and I strongly object to the proposed junction as it currently stands.

3. Ecological Survey related concerns. I have read through the documents and the Ecological Impact Assessment clearly highlights the presence of a bat community of local value. As an ecologist and resident with views across into the proposed development site and an allotment holder of one of the plots on Arborfield rd I am aware of the local, currently stable, bat populations. This development poses a significant threat to them and I do not believe the proposed mitigations are satisfactory. Yes, 'new' habitat will be created, however it is not sufficient to compensate for that which will be lost and it will be of a different character. It is not possible for development on this site to not cause the bats disruption and for there to be an overall loss of biodiversity. It is mentioned that

this disruption will be 'temporary' however, development here will break the continuity in forage and commuting space resource provision and the break will not be short enough not to damage populations. I would like to see timings of the work that show the new forage habitats being created *before* the destruction of the current forage habitat. I would also like lighting to be explicitly concerned on a light by light basis, particularly adjacent to the Arborfield rd boundary of the development.

4. In the Ecological Impact Assessment point 3.79 indicates that further bat night-time walkovers took place between August and October 2024 and states that once the surveys have been completed that a further update will be provided. This update has not been provided yet and, given the known presence of so many bat species, I do not think that this application can be considered further until that has been provided and is made available for comment.

5. Hedgehog boxes. A total of 1 hedgehog box has been proposed for this development, I did think that this was a joke, but it turned out not to be. This is short sighted, what needs to occur is for there to be a continued permeability of the site for wildlife in the area. There should be more provision for our declining mammal populations i.e. hedgehog highways; specially designed holes in fences between gardens, shrubs planted immediately adjacent to fences on the public side of properties - basically the developers need to be more sensitive to the biodiversity of an area that has recently seen significant expansion and resulting habitat degradation and loss.

6. Swifts like to communally nest, so this needs to be taken into account for spatial positioning of these boxes.

7. The currently open field part of the proposed development site is a great habitat for foraging swallows, they can regularly be seen on the wing over the field. What is the developer going to do to mitigate the destruction/removal of their foraging ground - note you cannot double/triple use already designated SANG. You will be removing/drastically negatively impacting the populations of these birds.

8. The developer appears to be trying to tick biodiversity net gain boxes without stopping to consider the underlying reasons behind these measures. What the developers propose does not satisfy them and will result in biodiversity loss, to begin with consider the soil fauna and the impact of changing a site which is currently uniformly open soil/vegetation to impermeable road surface and houses. Yes they will put in new trees etc. but these will not be of equal value and I have documented instances of developments in the area where, yes, the trees they have been obligated to put in are put in, however, they are often planted poorly in conditions they will not thrive in and then are not cared for. Yes the houses have gardens, however, the developers have no say in how they then go on to be managed, many are late astroturfed or covered in patio/decking and not managed for biodiversity - unless the university/developer sets up management contracts with the residents of the intended dwellings they shouldn't be included in any measures of biodiversity provision for

the proposed development. The BNG boxes are outlined for planning approval, transiently ticked and then in my opinion are unticked shortly afterwards as the trees/shrubs die before they establish and are not replaced. Even the fallacious 'Biodiversity Net Gain' measures are not met. There needs to be a plan for how the developers can be held to account to ensure they actually meet and complete the tasks they plan - a period of monitoring? A timescale whereby they are contractually obliged to make sure the boxes remain ticked.

In summary I wish to object to this application on the strongest possible terms, especially as it stands. I cannot see how this application can be accepted without significant changes and further public consultation.