

Fears raised for bird sanctuary

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Members of the Adams Road Bird Sanctuary Club are campaigning against a planning application which they claim threatens to ruin an important haven for wildlife in west Cambridge.

More than 40 people have objected to the city council about plans for two modern six-bedroom houses to be built in a garden close to the lake and woodland.

Complaints include that building so close to the bird sanctuary would harm its "tranquility", and that light and noise could scare off wildlife.

However, officers have recommended the application for approval at a planning committee meeting today (Wednesday).

Chair of the bird sanctuary, Penny Heath, said: "The sanctuary is a genuinely wild place almost in the centre of Cambridge. We have a lake which is an acre in size surrounded by huge trees. And because the gardens of the surrounding houses are so long it has total darkness, total lack of noise, it's really an exceptionally quiet and ancient space where wildlife thrives.

"If anyone is into bird watching it is a life-changing place. We have just



Penny Heath at Adams Road bird sanctuary.
Picture: Keith Heppell

built the loveliest bird hide where kingfishers perch in front of you. But it's also an enormously important place of personal tranquility and wellbeing that people have used during the pandemic. We are worried all this could be spoilt.

"The threat comes from an application to demolish an existing family home (18 Adams Road) and

replace it with two modernist glazed six-bedroomed houses, each with swimming pool and hard landscaping, one of whose curtilage starts six metres from the sanctuary. The construction and proximity of the new designer mansion will, we believe, effectively destroy the nature reserve as a refuge for wildlife.

"The construction noise alone may

scare birds away for two years and what if they don't come back?"

Concerns about light spilling from the houses have been echoed by the council's conservation officer.

However, the planning officer's report says: "Whilst the conservation officer raises concerns about the large sections of glazing and it is agreed that light spill may result upon the wider area, particularly from first floor and second floor elevations, this could be adequately addressed requiring that specialist glazing be installed mitigating excessive light spill sections of glazing and it is agreed that light spill may result upon the wider area, particularly from first floor and second floor elevations, this could be adequately addressed requiring that specialist glazing be installed mitigating excessive light spill."

The report adds that while the proposed dwelling would be "partially visible, particularly in the winter months" the position within the plot, "the predominantly two-storey scale" of the building and the "limited light spill" would not, in the view of officers, "result in unacceptable dominating impacts upon the character of the ARBS (bird sanctuary)".

Professor Cathy Speed, who has made the planning application, was contacted for comment.