JBA 10/35/Eco/OLR

4th February 2011

Lisa Probyn
Linden Homes Chiltern
Linden House
Linden Square
Harefield
Middlesex UB9 6TQ

Dear Lisa,

Re: Bat hibernation survey and habitat management at the former covered reservoir, Gondar Gardens

Introduction

James Blake Associates were commissioned to undertake a hibernation bat survey of the former covered reservoir and to undertake reptile habitat management at Gondar Gardens, Camden. The site visit was undertaken on the 2nd February 2011.

Methodology

Bats

The bat hibernation inspection survey methodology followed standard techniques and designs recommended by English Nature (now Natural England) and the Bat Conservation Trust.

The underground reservoir was inspected externally and internally for signs and evidence of bats and potential to support roosting bats by ecologists Odette Robson BSc (Hons) PhD MIEEM and bat licensed ecologist Mary Davies BSc (Hons) MSc (licence no: 20104163). This involved checking for the following:

- Signs and evidence of bat activity, such as the bats themselves, urine and grease stains, droppings, scratch marks, prey remains.

- Potential for access and suitability for roosting sites, based on large enough cracks, and crevices and other areas suitable for roosting.

Grassland Habitat Management

The grassland habitat management included reducing the encroaching scrub within the open grassland to the east of the site and strimming of ruderal vegetation (mainly brambles) which was encroaching from the eastern and southern boundaries.

Management also included selective strimming of the vegetation on the southern and eastern banks to create a mosaic of sward heights and structure within the grassland.

Results

Bats

The survey confirmed lack of potential access for bats into the former covered reservoir structure, verifying the findings of the previous survey (James Blake Associates 2010).

Signs or evidence of bats, or bats themselves were not observed internally or externally on the former covered reservoir.

Grassland Habitat management

Strimming of the scrub growth within the grassland habitats on the southern and eastern boundaries of the site maintains and enhances the open grassland character of this area. The management also provides open patches on the banks suitable for basking and foraging slow worms, whilst retaining areas of shelter amongst the grassland. This work was done at a time of year when the slow worms will be hibernating, thus reducing risk of injury to individual animals.

Discussion & Recommendations

Bats

It was considered highly unlikely that roosting bats were using the former covered reservoir for hibernating or at other times of year due to the lack of potential access and lack of signs and evidence of bats observed during the two inspections.

No further bat surveys or mitigation are considered necessary.

Reptile habitat management

The grassland management of the southern and eastern boundaries was considered likely to improve the value of this area for slow worms by maintaining the open grassland character and creating a mosaic of grass heights. This management should increase the long-term survival of individuals and the reptile population. The mosaic structure is likely to increase the botanical

diversity within the grassland which, in time, will enhance the site for invertebrates (reptile prey) improving foraging quality of the site for reptiles.

Conclusion

Therefore, it was considered highly unlikely that the proposed development of the covered reservoir would significantly impact on roosting bats. No further bat surveys or bat mitigation are considered necessary. Habitat management of the site is likely to increase the value of the site for reptiles and grassland diversity. It is recommended that habitat management is conducted following the grassland management plan to ensure habitats on the site do not regress.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Odette Robson MIEEM
Head of Ecology

References

Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (2007). Bat surveys-Good Practice Guidelines. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

English Nature (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

James Blake Associates (2010). Bat Surveys of Former Covered Reservoir, Gondar Gardens on behalf of Linden Homes.