

Andrea Luise Schrader

On behalf of Simon Stirling

By Email: a.schrader@xularchitecture.co.uk

31/08/12

Our reference: 854535 – Ecological Walk-over Survey, 9 Templewood Avenue, Hampstead, London NW3 7UY – Rev 0

Dear Ms Schrader,

9 Templewood Avenue, Hampstead

We write to present the results of an ecological walk-over survey carried out at 9 Templewood Avenue, Hampstead in connection with the proposed development of a rear extension and basement beneath the property. Surveys were requested by the owner of the property to supplement an outline planning application.

Proposed works include an extension of the basement level and construction of a new swimming pool. The works affect a small element of the total rear garden area and are predominately confined to the rear of the building.

The survey comprised an initial site walk-over to identify habitat types and those habitats that are suitable for protected species. The aim of this survey was to provide a baseline assessment of biodiversity value and to assess whether the site has any potential to support protected animal species. The report provides conclusions with regard to the impact of the proposed development on biodiversity. It also gives recommendations for enhancing the biodiversity of the site.

Methods

Ecological Walk-over

The survey was undertaken on 20th August 2012 by Victoria Gilbey, a Senior Ecologist for RSK. Victoria is an ecologist with over 5 years' experience of ecological consultancy. Victoria is a Full Member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MIEEM) and a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv).

The objectives of the survey were to:

- highlight any areas of the site with the potential to support protected species of animal;
- to identify the presence or evidence of protected species where possible; and
- to advise on how best to avoid negative affects on protected species.

Results

Ecological Context

The site is located in the centre of a residential area of Camden, close to the south west edge of Hampstead Heath; Hampstead Heath is a large park in central London covering approximately 790 acres.



The survey area included the front and rear gardens of the property, which are approximately 50 m² and 100 m² respectively, although it is understood that the proposed works will be confined to one third of the garden only. The front and rear gardens are fully landscaped with ornamental trees and shrubs. The rear garden is separated into three separate sections by fencing, with each section having a mown lawn dominated by *Lolium perenne* (Rye Grass) and surrounded by planted flower beds. In the first garden (closest to the house) there is a filled in water feature and a rockery with ornamental shrubs and the middle and furthest (rear) gardens both have sheds.



Plate 1 – View of ‘first’ rear garden with rockery

The front garden is a mixture of raised beds with ornamental shrubs and trees surrounded by a paved brick driveway.

The site is surrounded by houses with medium to large sized gardens.

Constraints Walk-over

The survey area included the front and rear gardens and the rear of the house.

The following observations were made with regard to protected species:

- There were no rare or invasive plant species.
- The ornamental trees and shrubs within the gardens would provide suitable habitat for breeding birds (during the breeding bird season March to mid August inclusive).
- There are no areas of suitable habitat for basking, resting, foraging and hibernating common species of reptile.
- The habitats on site are not suitable for terrestrial Great Crested Newts and no areas of standing water suitable for Great Crested Newts were found within 500 m of the site that are not separated by significant barriers to movement.
- No Badger setts or signs of badger were found.
- The rear of the building is in good condition and there are no features apparent that would be suitable for roosting bats.

Legislative Context:

Birds - General Protection

All species of bird are protected under Section 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The protection was extended by the CRoW Act. The legislation makes it an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Discussion and Further Actions

General

The habitats on site are common and ubiquitous throughout urban gardens in London. However, 'Private Gardens' are listed as a London BAP Priority Habitat and the proposed works would affect approximately 30% of the total rear garden area. The main area affected is composed of amenity grassland and a rockery of ornamental shrubs and trees with hard standing patio surrounding it. These habitats provide little ecological value.

Birds

It is envisaged that only a small amount of vegetation suitable for nesting birds will be removed as part of the proposed works. However, if any vegetation does need to be removed potential offences can be avoided by conducting work outside of the bird nesting season (March to mid August inclusive). If vegetation needs to be removed to facilitate works during the nesting season, then a hand search and a watching brief by an Ecologist may allow the work to proceed if no nests are present. If nests were to be found then work would have to stop close to the nest to avoid disturbance. Once the young have fledged the work could proceed.

Potential Ecological Enhancements

In addition to the ecological mitigation works described above, there are a number of potential enhancement options which may increase the biodiversity value of the site. These have been summarised and listed below:

1. The garden could benefit from planting native plant species in replacement of introduced ornamental shrubs and trees. This can enhance the garden for invertebrates and birds. This in turn increases the prey abundance for other species such as bats and owls.
2. Retain any wood from the cleared trees and shrubs in the rockery and create log piles in shaded spots within the garden. This will attract insects, including potentially stag beetles (a UK Biological Action Plan species) and eventually if left undisturbed for long enough, reptiles such as slow worms.
3. Networks of large gardens in Greater London are used by a variety of bird species. Erecting bird boxes on fences or larger shrubs could enhance the appeal of the site for bird species.
4. Finally, introducing 'hedgehog gaps' roughly 4 inches square at the bottom of both sides of the boundary fencing will enhance the site for hedgehogs by allowing them access between gardens, creating a habitat corridor.

If these ecological enhancements are implemented the overall biodiversity value of the site is likely to be improved.



If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 07825 328158 or email vgilbey@rsk.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Gilbey', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

Victoria Gilbey
Senior Consultant