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14-Jan-11

Dear Sirs

General Ecological Appraisal

The Grounds at #53 Fitzroy park

Matthew Liston BSc (Hons) MIEEM is a Natural England licence holder for Great Crested Newts and ecological surveyor for Arbtech. On 23rd June 2010 he undertook a general ecological appraisal of the garden at 53 Fitzroy Park, London, paying particular attention to the potential for protected species issues associated with the removal of trees and soil redistribution subsequent to the basement excavations.

Proposed Works

The proposal is to fell up to 18 trees on the site and re develop the property and garden.

Survey Area

The survey area consisted of a sloping garden to the rear of 53 Fitzroy Park—set in close proximity to the extensive open space at Hampstead Heath.

Site Description

The garden to the side and rear of #53 measured approximately 50m by 50m in extent and had been formally landscaped in the past, through was in very poor order at the time of survey.

Throughout the garden introduced shrubs dominated the planting scheme, with raised beds and marginal vegetation comprising species such as Cotoneaster sp, Silk Tassel Garryea elliptica, Hydrangea sp, Garden Rose Rosa sp, Huchera sp, Geranium sp, Sedum sp and dwarf

conifer sp. A pagoda supported various Clematis sp, Solanum sp and a Chocolate Vine Akebia quinata.

A small formal lawn was situated at the centre of the site, with species including Perennial Ryegrass Lolium perenne, Cocksfoot Dactylis glomerata, Annual Meadow-grass Poa annua, Smooth Meadow-grass P. pratensis, Creeping Fescue Festuca rubra and Barren Brome Bromus sterilis.

At the edges of the lawn, where light penetrated through the canopy of marginal scattered trees and mature introduced shrubs, a bed of Pendulous Sedge Carex pendula had become established that was beginning to dominate the area.

Scattered trees were numerous, generally planted in small groups around the edges of the garden. Most of the trees were semi-mature, with a few older specimens also present. Species included Sycamore Acer pseudoplatanus, Field Maple A. Campestre, Ash Fraxinus excelsior, Common Lime Tilia x vulgaris and White Willow Salix alba, the later particularly prevalent along the lawn margins.

Where the mature specimens had shaded the understorey, Ivy Hedera helix dominated the ground fauna, spreading over the ground and climbing the wooden panel fencing around the boundaries.

A small raised lawn bordered by introduced shrubs had a drystone wall style surround, this constructed from paving slabs.

Almost all of the non-tree species of vegetation at the site were exotic, non-native or naturalised species. This is very poor from a biodiversity perspective.

No rare or unusual plants are observed, and all native species observed were common and widespread.

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Impacts of Proposed Works

The habitat present was considered suitable for a limited range of wildlife.

The established beds of introduced shrubs had formed a shrub layer that was dense in some areas, providing nesting areas for birds and cover for small mammals and common amphibians.

The scattered trees did not support features such as woodpecker holes, fissures, peeling bark or broken limbs etc that are attractive to nesting birds and/or roosting bats.

The drystone wall around the raised lawn provided good quality refugia for common amphibians.

Recommendations

If the proposed development affects the mature shrubs that border the lawn, it should be confined to the period September to February inclusive, to avoid disturbing nesting birds. If this is not possible, then all site activity shall be immediately preceded by a detailed inspection for active birds' nests. Any nest found will be left undisturbed until it has ceased to be in use. No site activity shall take place within five metres of an occupied nest.

The trees outlined for felling were all semi-mature specimens and none of them possessed suitable features for nesting birds or roosting bats.

The potential for common amphibians and reptiles was high, with a large amount of cover and refugia available, coupled with good connectivity to nearby parkland with waterbodies. As such, care should be taken in areas that offer such cover, especially the small raised lawn with the drystone wall style surround.

No other surveys are considered necessary.

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(Updated by Robert Oates Dip FdSc MArborA, Director)

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