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Land at
North East Quadrant
Regents Place
London

Ecological Appraisal

A Report for Environ UK

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Executive Summary

- A Phase 1 habitat survey, protected species assessment and bat survey were carried out at the NEQ, Regent’s Place, London, in December 2005.
- The survey results showed the site to be of negligible value for wildlife. There was barely any natural vegetation present on the site.
- A visual inspection for bats of available parts of the buildings was undertaken and no signs of any bat activity was found. It is considered highly unlikely that bats would utilise any part of the site for roosting or indeed foraging or commuting.
- Feral pigeons are thought to nest on parts of the building and it may be that one or two other species may also nest within the site. Methods for avoiding impact on nesting birds are recommended.
- Recommendations for increasing the biodiversity interest of any redevelopment proposals include:
 - Use of native species or species attractive to invertebrates in any landscape proposals.
 - Use of green roofs to provide wildlife habitat.
 - Inclusion of water features such as ponds.
 - Installation of bird nesting structures within any buildings, for example to attract swifts.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Brief

Ecology Consultancy Ltd (ECL) was commissioned by Environ UK to undertake an ecological survey, protected species assessment and bat survey of land at North East Quadrant (NEQ), Regents Place, London. There are proposals to redevelop the site which could result in impacts on any ecological value that it may have, and in particular on species of plant or animal that are protected by legislation.

This document reports on the findings of the ecological survey and data search, and provides an assessment of the current ecological status of the site.

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation can ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. However, it is considered that sufficient detail was gathered to enable an objective assessment of the ecological value of the site.

1.2 Site Context & Status

The site lies within a pedestrianised complex of buildings, piazza and shopping malls immediately to the north of Euston Road. It comprises three discrete blocks of buildings of 1960’s origin that occupy approximately 1.2 ha of land. They comprise:

- Block E that previously provided accommodation for the Polytechnic of Central London (School of Languages),
- Beaty House that provides retail use at Ground Floor level, offices on the first floor and social housing (derelict at the time of the survey) on the five storeys above
- Project building

These buildings are set within an environment characterised by service roads and pedestrian piazza, with occasional planters typically containing trees and ground cover. Euston Tower, a tall landmark building, occupies the south eastern part of the larger site, but is without the current survey area, and immediately to the west

are relatively new office buildings around what is known as Triton Square. The eastern boundary of the NEQ site is formed by Hampstead Road, the northern boundary by Drummond Street, the southern by Euston Tower and the open piazza of Regents Place and to the west by the Triton Square development. The Ordnance Survey Grid reference to the centre of the site is TQ291824.

2.0 Survey Methodology

2.1 Extended phase I habitat survey

An extended Phase 1 Habitat survey of the site was carried out on 21 December 2005. The survey encompassed all internal and boundary features within the study area. Habitats were described and mapped following standard Phase 1 survey methodology (JNCC 1993) as modified for use in London by the Greater London Authority (GLA 2000). All plant species identifiable in the season were recorded.

2.2 Protected species assessment

The protected species assessment was based on an evaluation of habitats and vegetation recorded during the habitat survey. On this basis the species that were considered included:

- Birds
- Bats

The protected species assessment provides a preliminary appraisal of the likelihood of species that are protected by UK and European legislation occurring on the site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. Additional surveys may be recommended if, on the basis of the preliminary assessment, it is considered that protected species may be present.

2.3 Bat survey

Owing to the time of year when the site visit was made (December) the only form of bat survey that could be undertaken was a visual inspection of likely roosting places, looking in particular for bats or evidence of their occupation in the form of droppings, prey remains or staining from their urine. The exterior of the building was also inspected visually and, where necessary, by using binoculars with particular attention being given to the potential for droppings to be caught on brick work and window sills.

3.0 Results of survey

3.1 Habitats

Due to the intense urban nature of the site there is very little in the way of natural vegetation to be found anywhere on the site. A few ruderal species manage to survive in the joints between paving slabs or in the occasional gaps in concrete or tarmac. Species include annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, dandelion *Taraxacum agg.*, Guernsey fleabane *Conyza sumatrensis*, knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare*, groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* and annual pearlwort *Sagina apetala*. On the roof of 1-7, Euston Centre Block E were a few grey willow saplings *Salix cinerea* and butterfly bush *Buddleja davidii* and, where sufficient debris had accumulated to provide a rudimentary soil, a scattering of chickweed *Stellaria media*.

Formal planting comprised:

- Four early mature London plans *Platanus x hispanica* set individually into deep basement level apertures.
- A planter situated within Regents Place adjacent to Euston Tower with seven pairs of limes *Tilia sp* and with ivy *Ilex sp.* providing ground cover
- A planter situated between 1-7 Euston Block E and the new offices that form part of the Triton Square development. This comprised five multi-stemmed silver maple *Acer saccharinum* with recently planted *Cyclamen sp* beneath.
- Adjacent to this a void to an underground car park with a metal canopy that supported ivy and *Wisteria*.
- A ventilation shaft between the Project building and Beaty House with a clipped border of box *Buxus sempervirens* and some dwarf willows *Salix sp.*.
- A rectangular bed raised in the air on four columns several metres high that supported some young trees with a ground cover of ivy.

3.2 Bat survey

A visual inspection of the three blocks of buildings for any evidence of bats was made on the 21st December 2005.

Beaty House – This was a concrete panel clad building rectangular in shape with retail premises on the ground floor (operational at the time of the survey), commercial premises on the first floor and, above those, 5 storeys of derelict residential accommodation. Window frames were aluminium. The building was flat

roofed and, therefore, there were no roof voids that could be inspected. However, there were several flat-roofed brick built structures on the roof that contained various pieces of service machinery including that to operate lifts. These buildings had wooden louvres and soffits. The buildings were inspected both internally and externally. No signs of use by bats was found.

Euston Centre (Block E) – This was a six storey high concrete panel clad building with occasional mosaic panels, and aluminium window frames. As with the Beaty Building Block E was flat roofed and therefore there were no roof voids that could be inspected. Service buildings on the roof were again flat roofed brick built structures and, where possible, these were inspected both internally and externally. No signs of use by bats were found.

Project Building (Block C) – This was a single storey building of concrete panel and brick construction, and with aluminium window frames. It had a flat roof with a few air conditioning fans.

3.3 Other protected species

The only other protected species that could possibly be present in such a hard urban environment would be nesting birds. There was evidence of feral pigeon *Columba livia* in some of the service buildings situated on the roofs, otherwise no other bird species were seen.

4.0 Evaluation

The site is not designated in any way as being of ecological interest and based on the results of this Phase 1 survey, protected species assessment and bat survey, we evaluate the site as being of negligible interest for wildlife.

There is little in the way of natural vegetation on the site and the only protected species that are considered to be potentially present are bats and nesting birds. However, the bat survey found no evidence of bats and whilst a visual search, such as the one that was carried out as part of this survey, cannot provide a conclusive proof of their absence for the site, it seems highly unlikely that bats would be present for the following reasons

- There is an absence of roof voids, which is a preferred habitat of bat species such as pipistrelles *Pipistrellus spp.*
- The surrounding environment is devoid of foraging habitat
- The surrounding environment, especially that adjacent to Euston Road and Hampstead Road, is brightly lit at night and heavily trafficked resulting in a great deal of noise.

The area is not of great interest for breeding birds for similar reasons to those outlined above. However, it is apparent that feral pigeons nest within parts of the building and it is possible that one or two species of wild bird such as wren, robin or blackbird, may also nest.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The site is of negligible interest for wildlife. There is little in the way of natural habitat or vegetation present, and the likelihood of protected species other than nesting birds being present on site is considered to be very low. In order to avoid any impacts on nesting birds, any voids that allow birds to nest within them should preferably be closed off prior to the bird nesting season (normally taken to be from March to July inclusive). If possible, any demolition work should be carried out in the period August to February which is outside this season. If this proves impossible then a pre-demolition survey for any nesting birds should be undertaken and, if any are found, demolition in the vicinity of the nest should be postponed until nesting has been completed.

Otherwise, there would appear to be no other ecological constraints to the redevelopment of this site.

Measures could be incorporated within the new development that would enhance its value for wildlife over the current baseline conditions. These include:

- Use of native species or species attractive to invertebrates in any landscape proposals.
- Use of green roofs to provide wildlife habitat.
- Inclusion of water features such as ponds
- Installation of bird nesting structures within any buildings, for example to attract swifts. (see www.londons-swifts.org)

References

Nature Conservancy Council 1993 *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Stace, C. 1997 *New Flora of the British Isles (2nd Ed.)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Appendix 1 Legislation and Planning

LEGISLATION

Wildlife in the UK receives protection under various legislation including

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Protection of Badgers Act (1992)
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (1994)

Species relevant to the site that are protected under this legislation are:

- Bats
- Nesting birds

Habitats of regional or national importance are designated as statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Other statutory designations applied for sites of international importance include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Such sites are by definition also designated as SSSIs.

In addition to statutorily protected sites, there are a range of non-statutory designations applied at a local level by local planning authorities. These are called Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), Local Wildlife Sites or similar.

Bats

All species of bat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion in Schedule 5. All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994. The Act and Regulations make it illegal to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take bats,
- intentionally or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not),
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts,
- possess or transport a bat or any other part of a bat, unless acquired legally,
- sell, barter or exchange bats or parts of bats.

If a bat roost is to be affected by development activities, a licence from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) will need to be obtained to mitigate any detrimental effects.

Birds

All birds, their eggs and nests are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or to take or destroy their eggs. It is also illegal to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. Certain species receive additional special protection under Schedule 1 of the Act and under Annex 1 of the European Community Directive on the conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC).

Planning policy

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9 2005) 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' outlines the Government's commitment to the conservation of wildlife and natural features. It is mainly concerned with the protection of statutorily protected sites such as National Nature Reserves (NNR) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, PPS9 also addressed development and wildlife issues outside these statutory areas where it seeks to minimise adverse effects on wildlife and maximise benefits. In respect of nature conservation outside designated sites PPS 9 states:

"Sites of regional and local biodiversity and geological interest, which include Regionally Important Geological Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Local Sites, have a fundamental role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity targets; contributing to the quality of life and the well-being of the community; and in supporting research and education.

Networks of natural habitats provide a valuable resource. They can link sites of biodiversity importance and provide routes or stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species in the wider environment."

Appendix 2
Site Plan



