



32 Lawn Road, Camden
Planning Application by
Fairview Estates (Housing) Ltd
Ecological Assessment
October 2014

LAWN RD NW3.





FAIRVIEW NEW HOMES LTD

LAND AT LAWN ROAD,
CAMDEN,
LONDON

Ecological Assessment

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SURVEY METHODOLOGY	2
3	ECOLOGICAL FEATURES	5
4	WILDLIFE USE OF THE SITE	7
5	ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION	10
6	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	14
7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	17

PLANS

PLAN ECO1	Site Location and Ecological Designations
PLAN ECO2	Ecological Features

PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPH 1	Building B1
PHOTOGRAPH 2	Roof of Building B1
PHOTOGRAPH 3	Building B2
PHOTOGRAPH 4	Roof of Building B2

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1	Information downloaded from MAGIC website
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background & Proposals

- 1.1.1. Ecology Solutions was instructed by Fairview New Homes Ltd in April 2014 to undertake an ecological assessment of the land at Lawn Road in the London Borough of Camden (see Plan ECO1).
- 1.1.2. The proposals for the site comprise of the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of a new residential development including associated gardens and landscape planting.

1.2. Site Characteristics

- 1.2.1. The site is for the most part surrounded by existing roads and residential development. The principal exception to this is Belsize Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Site of Local Importance (SLI) to the south-west (see Plan ECO2).
- 1.2.2. In summary the site consists of two buildings and associated hardstanding, as well as areas of amenity planting, amenity grassland and trees.

1.3. Ecological Assessment

- 1.3.1. This document assesses the ecological interest of the site. The importance of the habitats within the site are evaluated with due consideration given to the guidance published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)¹.
- 1.3.2. Where necessary, mitigation measures are recommended so as to safeguard any significant existing ecological interest within the site and, where appropriate, potential enhancement measures are put forward and reference made to both national and local biodiversity priorities.

¹Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2006) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom* (version 7 July 2006). <http://www.cieem.net/ecia-guidelines-terrestrial-freshwater-and-coastal->

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. The methodology utilised for the survey work can be split into three areas, namely desk study, habitat survey and faunal survey. These are discussed in more detail below.

2.2. Desk Study

- 2.2.1. In order to compile background information on the site and the surrounding area, Ecology Solutions contacted Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL).
- 2.2.2. Further information on designated sites from a wider search area was obtained from the online Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)² database, which uses information held by Natural England and other organisations. This information is reproduced at Appendix 1 and where appropriate on Plan ECO1.

2.3. Habitat Survey Methodology

- 2.3.1. Habitat surveys were carried out by Ecology Solutions in February 2014 in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the site and to identify the main habitats and associated plant species.
- 2.3.2. The site was surveyed based around extended Phase 1 survey methodology³, as recommended by Natural England, whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail.
- 2.3.3. Using the above method, the site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified.
- 2.3.4. All the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent in different seasons. Nonetheless, given the habitats present it is considered an accurate and robust assessment has been made of the botanical interest.

2.4. Faunal Survey

- 2.4.1. Obvious faunal activity, such as birds or mammals observed visually or by call during the course of the surveys, was recorded. Specific attention was paid to any potential use of the site by protected species, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, or other notable species.

²<http://www.magic.gov.uk>

³Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit*. England Field Unit, Nature Conservancy Council, reprinted JNCC, Peterborough.

- 2.4.2. Specific surveys were undertaken in respect of bats, with all surveys led by a licensed bat worker.

Bats

- 2.4.3. All buildings within the site were subject to an initial appraisal of their potential to support roosting bats.
- 2.4.4. The probability of a building being used by bats as a summer roost site increases if it:
- is largely undisturbed;
 - dates from pre-20th Century;
 - has a large roof void with unobstructed flying spaces;
 - has access points for bats (though not too draughty);
 - has wooden cladding or hanging tiles; and/or
 - is in a rural setting and close to woodland or water.
- 2.4.5. Conversely, the probability decreases if a building is of a modern or pre-fabricated design/construction, is in an urban setting, has small or cluttered roof voids, has few gaps at the eaves or is a heavily disturbed premises.
- 2.4.6. Field surveys were undertaken with regard to best practice guidelines issued by Natural England (2004⁴), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004⁵) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2012⁶).
- 2.4.7. Building B2 (see Plan ECO2) was surveyed internally and externally to check for bats or evidence of use by bats in May 2014. The survey work was undertaken using (where necessary) a ladder, torch, endoscope, mirrors and binoculars.
- 2.4.8. Internally, evidence of the presence of bats was searched for where possible, with particular attention paid to the roof beams. A detailed search was made for bat droppings on the floors of the buildings (droppings can indicate present or past use by bats and extent of use). Other signs searched for included dead animals, staining on beams or around crevices and areas that were conspicuously cobweb-free.
- 2.4.9. Exterior checks of the buildings were also undertaken in order to search for signs of any use by bats. Binoculars were used to inspect any inaccessible areas more closely.
- 2.4.10. In addition to the internal and external surveys surveyors undertook a dusk emergence survey on 8 May 2014 using EM3 bat detectors.
- 2.4.11. The survey methods undertaken aimed to identify any roosting bats leaving in the evening or using the wider site for foraging. The dusk

⁴ Mitchell-Jones, A. J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

⁵ Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (Eds.) (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual*. 3rd edition. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

⁶ Hundt, L (2012). *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines*. 2nd Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

survey was undertaken from approximately thirty minutes before sunset until approximately one and a half hours after sunset.

2.4.12. All trees within the site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Features typically favoured by bats or evidence of past use by bats were searched for including:

- Obvious holes, e.g. rot holes and old Woodpecker holes;
- Dark staining on the tree, below the hole;
- Tiny scratch marks around a hole from bats' claws;
- Cavities, splits and or loose bark from broken or fallen branches, lightning strikes etc.; and
- Very dense covering of mature Ivy over trunk.

3. ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

3.1. A habitat survey was undertaken within the site by Ecology Solutions in February 2014.

3.2. The following main habitat / vegetation types were identified within the site during the survey undertaken:

- Buildings;
- Amenity grassland;
- Hardstanding;
- Amenity planting;
- Trees; and
- Scrub.

3.3. The location of these habitats is shown on Plan ECO2.

3.4. Buildings

3.4.1. There are two buildings on site.

3.4.2. Building B1 is a two storey brick and concrete building with a flat roof, which serves as a secure car parking facility (see Photographs 1 and 2).

3.4.3. Building B2 is a single storey brick built structure with a flat roof, the former Fleet Community Centre (see Photographs 3 and 4).

3.4.4. Externally, the roof is a flat horizontal layer of roofing felt without any apparent breaches. Around the edge of the roof are a number of barge boards with some gaps.

3.4.5. Internally, the roof structure comprises wooden board and small thin beams. The ceiling is partly in disrepair, with a gap onto a small loft cavity. The loft cavity is not lagged or otherwise insulated.

3.5. Trees

3.5.1. Throughout the site there are a number of semi-mature trees; species include Tree of Heaven *Ailanthus altissima*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. A semi-mature Ash is also present just beyond the site to the north (see Plan ECO2).

3.6. Amenity Grassland

3.6.1. There are areas of amenity grassland throughout the site. The sward is generally dominated by Perennial Rye Grass *Lolium perenne*. Other species include Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Greater Plantain *Plantago major*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Hairy Bittercress *Cardamine hirsuta*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Procrumbent Yellow-sorrel *Oxalis corniculata* and Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*.

3.7. Amenity Planting

- 3.7.1. Areas of amenity planting are found within the site and are divided into three distinct areas.
- 3.7.2. AP1 is located within the south-east of the site. The main species recorded here is *Kerria japonica*.
- 3.7.3. AP2 is located within the north of the site. Species recorded here include Green Alkanet, *Clematis* sp., Lords and Ladies *Arum maculatum* and Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, *Hebe* sp. and Annual Mercury *Mercurialis annua*.
- 3.7.4. AP3 is located in the south-east of the site. Species recorded here include Californian Lilac *Ceanothus* sp., *Aucuba* sp., *Acer* sp., *Bergenia* sp., *Senecio* sp. and *Cotoneaster* sp.

3.8. Hardstanding

- 3.8.1. Species colonising the areas of hardstanding include Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius* and Dandelion.

3.9. Background Records

- 3.9.1. No records of notable plant species were returned from within the site. The closest record returned by GiGL of notable plant species was of Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus* (UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006), recorded in 2011 approximately 0.4km south-west of the site.

4. WILDLIFE USE OF THE SITE

- 4.1. General observations were made during the surveys of any faunal use of the site, with specific attention paid to the potential presence of protected species.

4.2. Bats

- 4.2.1. Building B1 is considered to have no potential to support roosting bats.
- 4.2.2. Building B2 has some very limited potential to support roosting bats. The gaps in the barge boards offer some potential but the lack of apparent external roofing breaches, the gap in the ceiling allowing light into loft cavity, the lack of insulation to stabilise loft cavity temperature and the small size of the loft cavity all reduce the building's suitability for bats.
- 4.2.3. The presence of the Local Nature Reserve in the immediate locality and many larger private gardens in the vicinity means that there are suitable foraging resources in the immediate area, as well as those afforded by the trees that are present on site. Somewhat further afield, but within bat commuting distance, is Hampstead Heath, which offers high quality foraging resources.
- 4.2.4. No signs of droppings, urine stains, feeding remains, dead bats or other evidence of bats were found during the internal survey.

Emergence Survey 08.05.14 (EM3)

- 4.2.5. The results of the dusk emergence survey completed on the evening of 8 May are summarised below and illustrated on Plan ECO2.
- 4.2.6. The survey was undertaken in favourable weather conditions. The temperature was mild, there was no precipitation and there was little wind during the survey.
- 4.2.7. The emergence survey recorded a very low level of bat activity, with only a single pass of a commuting Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* at the north-west corner of B1 at 21:30. The survey was consequently ended at 22:00 due to the lack of bat activity and the very low likelihood of late-emerging species occurring at this location.
- 4.2.8. Overall the building is considered to have only low potential to support roosting bats and a single emergence survey is therefore sufficient.
- 4.2.9. The trees present do not possess features of which bats could make use for roosting purposes.
- 4.2.10. Several bat records were returned by GiGL. The closest bat record was identified as a *Pipistrellus* sp. bat recorded in 2006 0.4km to the north of the site. The closest and most recent record of a Daubenton's Bat is 0.7km to the north-west of the site in 2005 and the closest and most recent record of Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus* is 0.6km west of the site in 2009. The closest record of a Common Pipistrelle is 0.6km west of the site in 2009, the most recent record of this species 1.2km south-west of the site in

2012. The closest record of a *Myotis* sp. bat is 0.8km north in 2005 and the most recent is 1.7km south-east in 2007. The closest record of a Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctula* is 0.7km north-west in 2005; the most recent record of this species is 1.5km north in 2009.

4.3. Badgers

- 4.3.1. No signs of sett-building or foraging by Badgers *Meles meles* were recorded during survey work undertaken. The habitats are unsuitable for Badgers and they are highly unlikely to be present in this location.
- 4.3.2. No records of Badgers were returned as part of the desk survey.

4.4. Other Mammals

- 4.4.1. Records returned by GiGL show that a Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* was recorded in 2007 approximately 1km north-west of the site. The habitats within the site are unsuitable for this species.

4.5. Birds

- 4.5.1. No protected or notable bird species were recorded within the site during the survey.
- 4.5.2. A number of notable bird species records were returned by the GiGL data search; none of these were from within the site. The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1 and/or UK priority species recorded are: Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* recorded 1.1km north in 2004, Honey-Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* recorded 1.1km north in 2005, Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* recorded 1.1km north in 2006, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* recorded 0.3km south in 2010, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* recorded 0.4km north-west in 2009, Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* recorded 0.3km south in 2009, Redwing *Turdus iliacus* recorded 0.2km south in 2011, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* recorded 1.1km north in 2007 and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* recorded 1.6km south in 2010.
- 4.5.3. Records of Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, a London priority and Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1 species, were returned. The closest was from approximately 1.2 km north of the site in 1995.

4.6. Reptiles

- 4.6.1. No habitat suitable for reptiles was recorded within the site.
- 4.6.2. No records of any reptile species were returned by GiGL during the desk study undertaken.

4.7. Amphibians

- 4.7.1. There are no waterbodies on site that could support Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* or other amphibians. The closest waterbody from the site is approximately 30m southwest within Belsize Wood LNR.
- 4.7.2. No records of Great Crested Newts were returned by GiGL during the desk study undertaken. Other amphibian records in the area were Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* recorded 0.4km north-west in 2008 and most recently 1.2km south in 2011. The closest and most recent record of Common Frog *Rana temporaria* was 0.3km south in 2010.

4.8. Invertebrates

- 4.8.1. The habitats within the site are likely to support a range of common invertebrate species but there is no evidence to suggest that any notable species would be present.
- 4.8.2. Notable records of invertebrates protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act returned are that of Fairy Shrimp *Chirocephalus diaphanus* recorded 1.2km south in 2011, Stag Beetle *Lucanus cervus* recorded 0.8km north-east in 2008 and White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album* recorded 0.7km north-west in 2010.
- 4.8.3. UK BAP species records returned were of Oak Hook-tip *Drepana binaria*, Mullein Wave *Scopula marginepunctata*, Small Phoenix *Ecliptopera silaceata*, Dusky Thorn *Ennomos fuscantaria*, Brindled Beauty *Lycia hirtaria*, White Ermine *Spilosoma lubricipeda*, Buff Ermine *Spilarctia luteum*, Small Square-spot *Diarsia rubi*, Shoulder-striped Wainscot *Leucania comma*, Centre-barred Sallow *Atethmia centrargo*, Grey Dagger *Acronicta psi* and Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis* recorded 0.6km north-east in 2005, Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth *Hemaris tityus* recorded 1.2km south in 2010 and Sallow *Xanthia icteritia* recorded 1.6km west in 2007.

5. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

5.1. The Principles of Ecological Evaluation

- 5.1.1. The guidelines for ecological evaluation produced by CIEEM propose an approach that involves professional judgement, but makes use of available guidance and information, such as the distribution and status of the species or features within the locality of the project.
- 5.1.2. The methods and standards for site evaluation within the British Isles have remained those defined by Ratcliffe⁷. These are broadly used across the United Kingdom to rank sites so priorities for nature conservation can be attained. For example, current sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation maintains a system of data analysis that is roughly tested against Ratcliffe's criteria.
- 5.1.3. In general terms, these criteria are size, diversity, naturalness, rarity and fragility, while additional secondary criteria of typicalness, potential value, intrinsic appeal, recorded history and the position within the ecological / geographical units are also incorporated into the ranking procedure.
- 5.1.4. Any assessment should not judge sites in isolation from others, since several habitats may combine to make it worthy of importance to nature conservation.
- 5.1.5. Further, relying on the national criteria would undoubtedly distort the local variation in assessment and therefore additional factors need to be taken into account, e.g. a woodland type with comparatively poor species diversity, common in the south of England, may be of importance at its northern limits, say in the border country.
- 5.1.6. In addition, habitats of local importance are often highlighted within a local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The Camden BAP and the London BAP have been considered as part of this assessment where relevant.
- 5.1.7. Levels of importance can be determined within a defined geographical context from the immediate site or locality through to the international level.
- 5.1.8. The legislative and planning policy context are also important considerations and have been given due regard throughout this assessment.

5.2. Habitat Evaluation

Designated Sites

- 5.2.1. **Statutory Sites.** Information obtained is to the effect that there are no statutory designated sites within or directly adjacent to the site. The closest such site is Belsize Wood LNR which is approximately 20m

⁷Ratcliffe, D A (1977). *A Nature Conservation Review: the Selection of Study areas of Biological National Importance to Nature Conservation in Britain*. Two Volumes. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

southeast of the site, beyond Lawn Road (see Plans ECO1 and ECO2). This site has a variety of habitats including mixed woodland, scrub, hedgerows, amenity planting and a pond. Redevelopment of the site is not likely to have any significant effect on the LNR.

- 5.2.2. The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is Hampstead Heath Wood SSSI, 1.35km to the north, an area of ancient woodland with important dead wood habitats. There is no likelihood of any adverse effects on this site as a result of the proposed redevelopment.
- 5.2.3. **Non-statutory Sites.** There are no non-statutory designated sites within the site boundary. However, on the opposite side of Lawn Road and approximately 20m to the southwest from the site boundary is Belsize Wood SLI. This site shares very similar boundaries to Belsize Wood LNR and is also designated for the same reasons.
- 5.2.4. Approximately 300m to the north of the site is Gospel Oak Railsides SBI1, a mosaic of habitats including woodland, scrub and grassland. This area provides a valuable wildlife corridor and habitat for a number of species.
- 5.2.5. Redevelopment of the site is not likely to have any significant effect on these non-statutory sites.

Habitats

- 5.2.6. Overall the majority of the habitats present are of negligible ecological interest and their loss to the proposed development would be of no significance.
- 5.2.7. The principal exception to this is the semi-mature trees within the site, which are of some ecological interest. It is recommended that they be retained and incorporated into the proposed redevelopment of the site if possible, or where this is not possible that they be replaced with new planting..
- 5.2.8. It is recommended that new planting be focused on native species and those of benefit to native wildlife. New areas of amenity grassland and landscape planting where previously the majority was hardstanding will also create new opportunities. Overall there is likely to be a net gain in terms of the ecological interest of the habitats present.

Invasive Species

- 5.2.9. Cotoneaster, Tree of Heaven and Green Alkanet have been identified on site and are categorised as invasive species in London by the London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI). The London Invasive Species Initiative is a sub-group of the London Biodiversity Partnership which encourages better co-ordination and partnership working to prevent, reduce and eliminate the impacts caused by invasive non-native species across the city.

- 5.2.10. Cotoneaster is classed as LISI 2, which denotes that in London it is a:

Species of high impact or concern present at specific sites that require attention such as control, management or eradication.

- 5.2.11. Tree of Heaven is classed as LISI 3, which denotes that in London it is a:

Widespread species for which eradication is not feasible but where avoiding spread to other sites may be required.

- 5.2.12. Green Alkanet is classed as LISI 6, denoting that in London it is a:

Species that [is] not currently considered to pose a threat or have the potential to cause problems in London.

- 5.2.13. It is noted that the control of species listed under the LISI is not a legal requirement, but nonetheless where works are proposed within or close to the boundary vegetation all reasonable measures should be taken to prevent the spread of these plant species. Where vegetation is to be removed the material should be disposed of at an approved facility.

5.3. Faunal Evaluation

Bats

- 5.3.1. **Legislation.** All bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 ("the Habitats Regulations"). These include provisions making it an offence:

- Deliberately to kill, injure or take (capture) bats;
- Deliberately to disturb bats in such a way as to:-
 - (i) be likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate; or
 - (ii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- To damage or destroy any breeding or resting place used by bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly to obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection (even if bats are not in residence).

- 5.3.2. The words deliberately and intentionally include actions where a court can infer that the defendant knew that the action taken would almost inevitably result in an offence, even if that was not the primary purpose of the act.

- 5.3.3. The offence of damaging (making it worse for the bat) or destroying a breeding site or resting place is an absolute offence. Such actions do not have to be deliberate for an offence to be committed.

- 5.3.4. In accordance with the Habitats Regulations the licensing authority (Natural England) must apply the three derogation tests as part of the process of considering a licence application. These tests are that:

1. the activity to be licensed must be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest or for public health and safety;

2. there must be no satisfactory alternative; and
 3. the favourable conservation status of the species concerned must be maintained.
- 5.3.5. Licences can usually only be granted if the development is in receipt of full planning permission.
- 5.3.6. **Site Usage.** The results of the bat survey work undertaken found no use of the buildings for roosting purposes. Overall bat activity was very low, with only a single Common Pipistrelle recorded. The presence of the Local Nature Reserve in the immediate locality and many larger private gardens in the vicinity mean that there are suitable foraging resources in the immediate area, as well as those afforded by the trees that are present on site. Somewhat further afield, but within bat commuting distance, is Hampstead Heath, which offers high quality foraging resources.
- 5.3.7. **Mitigation and Enhancements.** There is no requirement for a Natural England European Protected Species licence, and the buildings may be demolished at any time, subject to the caveat expressed below with respect to nesting birds. The redevelopment is not likely to have any significant effects on bat species. A landscape strategy based on native species could encourage greater use of the site by foraging bats.

Birds

- 5.3.8. **Legislation.** Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is concerned with the protection of wild birds, whilst Schedule 1 lists species that are protected by special penalties. All species of birds receive general protection whilst nesting.
- 5.3.9. **Site Usage.** It is likely that the trees and shrubs present on site will offer good nesting and foraging resources for a variety of common bird species, but there is no evidence to suggest that any notable species would be present.
- 5.3.10. **Mitigation and Enhancements.** It is recommended that a check survey for nesting bird species be undertaken prior to any demolition, or that this be done outside of the nesting bird season (typically March to July inclusive). It is recommended that check surveys of the roof areas of any larger buildings be undertaken to ensure birds' nests are absent prior to demolition commencing in order to ensure that no offence under the legislation is committed. No further survey work is required for birds provided the vegetation is cleared outside of the nesting season.
- 5.3.11. New planting undertaken as part of the proposed development should include native species. This would offer new foraging and nesting habitats for a variety of species.

6. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1. The site is wholly situated in the London Borough of Camden. The planning policy framework that relates to nature conservation in Camden is issued at three main administrative levels: nationally through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); at regional level through the London Plan; and at borough level through the Camden Local Development Framework. Any proposed development will be judged in relation to the policies contained within these documents.

6.2. National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.2.1. Guidance on national policy for biodiversity and geological conservation is provided by the NPPF, published in March 2012. It is noted that the NPPF continues to refer to further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system provided by Circular 06/05 (DEFRA / ODPM, 2005) accompanying the now-defunct Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9).
- 6.2.2. The key element of the NPPF is that there should be “*a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking*” (paragraph 14). It is important to note that this presumption “*does not apply where development requiring Appropriate Assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined*” (paragraph 119).
- 6.2.3. A number of policies in the NPPF are comparable to those in PPS9, including reference to minimisation of impacts to biodiversity and provision of net gains to biodiversity where possible (paragraph 109) and ensuring that Local Authorities place appropriate weight to statutory and non-statutory nature conservation designations, protected species and biodiversity.
- 6.2.4. The NPPF also considers the strategic approach which Local Authorities should adopt with regard to the protection, enhancement and management of green infrastructure, priority habitats and ecological networks, and the recovery of priority species.
- 6.2.5. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF comprises of a number of principles which Local Authorities should apply, including encouraging opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments; provision for refusal of planning applications if significant harm cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated for; applying the protection given to European sites to potential SPAs, possible SACs, listed or proposed Ramsar sites and sites identified (or required) as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites; and the provision for the refusal for developments resulting in the loss or deterioration of ‘irreplaceable’ habitats - unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

- 6.2.6. National policy therefore implicitly recognises the importance of biodiversity and that with sensitive planning and design, development and conservation of the natural heritage can co-exist and benefits can, in certain circumstances, be obtained.

6.3. Regional Policy

The London Plan Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (published July 2011)

- 6.3.1. The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, and it sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2031. It forms part of the development plan for Greater London. London boroughs' local plans need to be in general conformity with the London Plan, and its policies guide decisions on planning applications by councils and the Mayor.
- 6.3.2. The London Plan includes five policies which are concerned with nature conservation matters and relevant to the site. These are summarised below.
- 6.3.3. *Policy 2.18: Green Infrastructure* is concerned with the promotion of access to London's open spaces, and in securing benefits including biodiversity.
- 6.3.4. *Policy 5.3: Sustainable Design and Construction* requires that new developments promote and protect biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- 6.3.5. *Policy 5.13 Sustainable Drainage* stipulates the need for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) unless impractical, with reference to delivering policy objectives for biodiversity.
- 6.3.6. *Policy 7.19: Biodiversity and Access to Nature* is concerned with the protection, promotion and management of biodiversity in support of the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy.
- 6.3.7. *Policy 7.21 Trees and Woodlands* requires the protection of these features as part of development proposals.
- 6.3.8. *The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy*, published in July 2002, provides detailed contextual information on London's nature conservation interest, and identifies priorities for action. These include avoiding adverse effects on areas of nature conservation interest wherever possible while also including provision for ecological enhancement as part of new developments.

6.4. Local Policy – London Borough of Camden

Core Strategy

- 6.4.1. The Core Strategy was adopted in November 2010 and is central to the Local Development Framework. It contains a single policy addressing nature conservation issues, namely *CS15 – Protecting and improving our parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity*.

- 6.4.2. Policy CS15 is largely concerned with providing new green spaces and increasing access by the general public to such spaces. It notes that the Council will seek to protect existing trees and promote the provision of new trees and vegetation, to require the provision of new and enhanced habitat where, and seeking to promote habitat corridors.

Camden Development Policies 2010-2025

- 6.4.3. The Development Policies document was adopted in November 2010. It does not contain policies relating specifically to nature conservation, but Policy DP22 – Promoting sustainable design and construction makes reference to relevant topics.

Camden Planning Guidance

- 6.4.4. The London Borough of Camden has produced a number of Camden Planning Guidance documents to supplement adopted planning policy. There is reference to good design and to planning obligations relating to wildlife in this series, but the most relevant is *CPG3: Sustainability*, published in September 2013. This document contains a specific section on biodiversity and how measures can be included to enhance provision for wildlife as part of new developments.

6.5. Discussion

- 6.5.1. The redevelopment proposals for the site would be judged against the policies summarised above. It is considered that the development site is of intrinsically low ecological interest. Mitigation and enhancement measures have been recommended to offset any potential adverse impacts. Taking these recommendations on board it is considered that the relevant policy requirements will be met.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. Ecology Solutions was instructed by Fairview New Homes Ltd in April 2014 to undertake an ecological assessment of the land at Lawn Road in the London Borough of Camden (see Plan ECO1).
- 7.2. The proposals for the site comprise of the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of a new residential development including associated gardens and landscape planting.
- 7.3. The site was subject to an extended Phase 1 habitat survey in February 2014. A desk-based study was also undertaken.
- 7.4. **Statutory Sites** There are no statutory designated sites within or adjacent to the site. The closest such site is Belsize Wood LNR which is approximately 20m southeast of the site, beyond Lawn Road (see Plans ECO1 and ECO2). This site has a variety of habitats including mixed woodland, scrub, hedgerows, amenity planting and a pond. Redevelopment of the site is not likely to have any significant effect on the LNR.
- 7.5. The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is Hampstead Heath Wood SSSI, 1.35km to the north, an area of ancient woodland with important dead wood habitats. There is no likelihood of any adverse effects on this site as a result of the proposed redevelopment.
- 7.6. **Non-statutory Sites** There are no non-statutory designated sites within the site boundary. On the opposite side of Lawn Road and approximately 20m to the southwest from the site boundary is Belsize Wood SLI. This site shares very similar boundaries to Belsize Wood LNR and is also designated for the same reasons.
- 7.7. Approximately 300m to the north of the site is Gospel Oak Railsides SBI1, a mosaic of habitats including woodland, scrub and grassland. This area provides a valuable wildlife corridor and habitat for a number of species.
- 7.8. Redevelopment of the site is not likely to have any significant effect on these non-statutory sites.
- 7.9. **Habitats** Overall the majority of the habitats present are of negligible ecological interest and their loss to the proposed development would be of no significance.
- 7.10. It is recommended that new planting be focused on native species and those of benefit to native wildlife. New areas of amenity grassland and landscape planting where previously the majority was hardstanding will also create new opportunities. Overall there is a net gain in terms of the ecological interest of the habitats present.
- 7.11. **Invasive Species** Cotoneaster, Tree of Heaven and Green Alkanet were identified on site during survey work and are categorised as invasive species in London by the London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI). Where works are proposed within or close to the boundary vegetation all reasonable measures should be taken to prevent the spread of these plant species and where

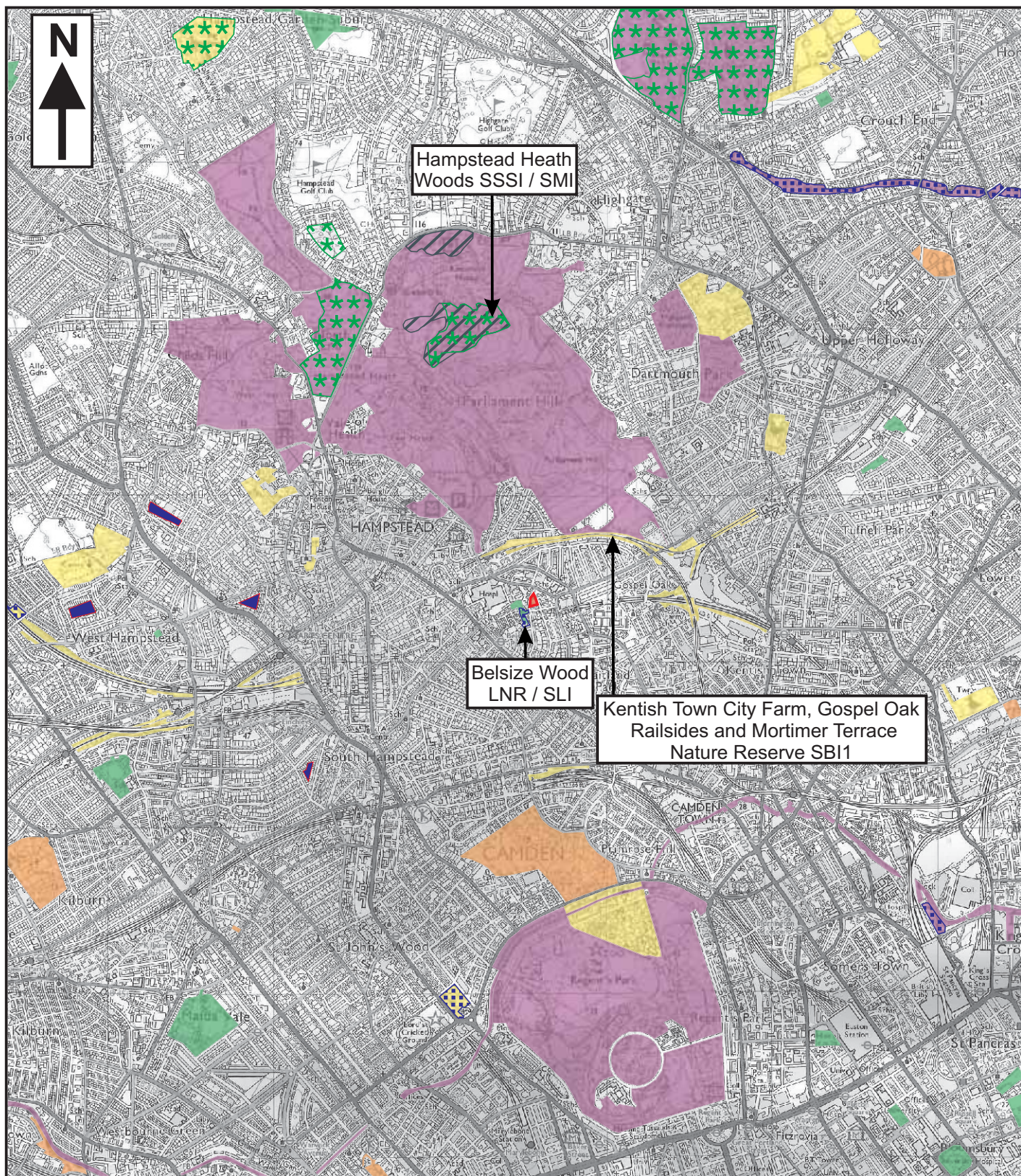
vegetation is to be removed the material should be disposed of at an approved facility.

- 7.12. **Protected Species** Observations of the buildings present revealed features of which bats could make limited use for roosting. There are areas of foraging habitat within the site and in the immediate vicinity.
- 7.13. The redevelopment is unlikely to have any significant adverse effects on bat species. There is no requirement for a Natural England European Protected Species licence, and the buildings may be demolished at any time. A landscape strategy based on native species could encourage greater use of the site by foraging bats.
- 7.14. It is likely that the trees and shrubs present on site will offer good nesting and foraging resources for a variety of common bird species, but there is no evidence to suggest that any notable species would be present.
- 7.15. It is recommended that a check survey for nesting bird species be undertaken prior to any demolition, or that this be done outside of the nesting bird season (typically March to July inclusive).
- 7.16. New planting undertaken as part of the proposed development should include native species. This would offer new foraging and nesting habitats for a variety of species.
- 7.17. No evidence of the presence of other protected or notable species was recorded on site during survey work undertaken or from the background data search information received.
- 7.18. In conclusion, it is considered that there is no overriding ecological constraint to the development of the site and it is considered that the relevant policy requirements will be met. The proposals accord with planning policy with regard to nature conservation at all administrative levels.

PLANS

PLAN ECO1

Site Location and Ecological Designations



KEY:

-  SITE LOCATION
-  SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE (SMI)
-  SITE OF BOROUGH IMPORTANCE GRADE 1 (SB11)
-  SITE OF BOROUGH IMPORTANCE GRADE 2 (SB12)
-  SITE OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE (SLI)
-  SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI)
-  LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (LNR)
-  ANCIENT WOODLAND



6209: LAWN ROAD,
CAMDEN, LONDON

PLAN ECO1:
SITE LOCATION AND
ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

PLAN ECO2

Ecological Features

PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPH 1: Building B1



PHOTOGRAPH 2: Roof of Building B1



PHOTOGRAPH 3: Building B2



PHOTOGRAPH 4: Roof of Building B2



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Information downloaded from MAGIC website



Legend

-  Local Nature Reserves (England)
-  National Nature Reserves (England)
-  Ramsar Sites (England)
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
-  Special Areas of Conservation (England)
-  Special Protection Areas (England)
-  Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
-  Ancient Replanted Woodland

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 51700
 ymin = 181300
 xmax = 536000
 ymax = 190700

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e c o l o g y s o l u t i o n s f o r p l a n n e r s a n d d e v e l o p e r s

