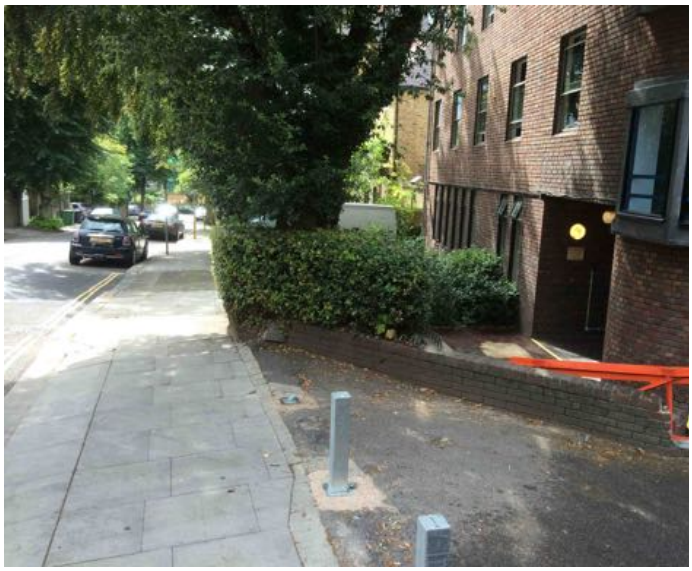
Fitzjohn's Avenue, NW3

Prepared for the London Borough of Camden

Ecological Appraisal

A detailed planning application, submitted on behalf of PegasusLife to provide specialist living accommodation for older people

PegasusLife



79 Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead, London NW3

Ecology Appraisal

August 2014

1. Introduction

1.1 Gary Grant CEnv, FCIEEM working on behalf of Camlins, was commissioned to undertake an ecological survey and assessment of a proposed re-development project at 79 Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead, London NW3. Figure 1 shows the location of the site.

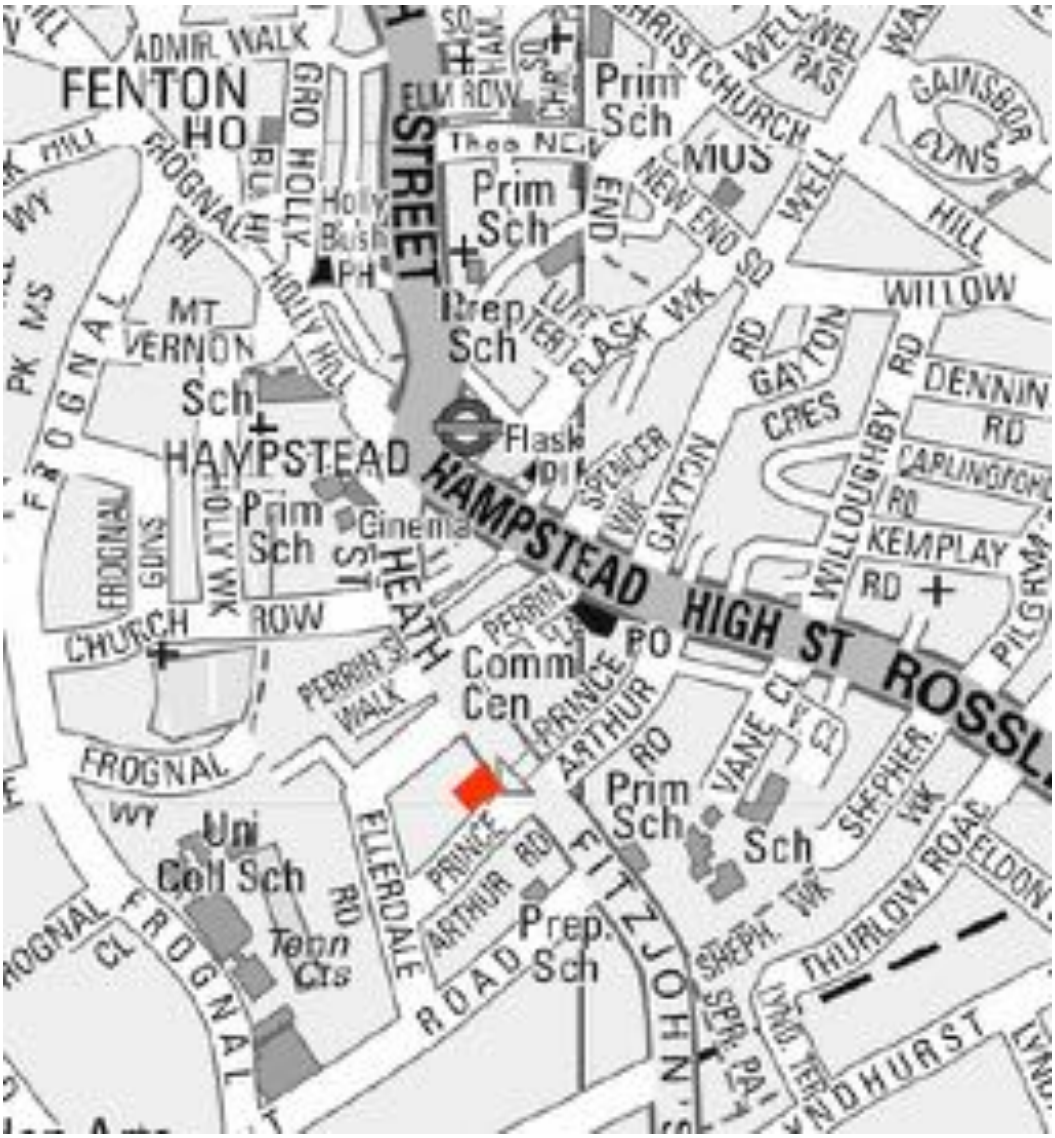


Figure 1. Location (site in red)

1.2 A desk study, phase 1 habitat survey and an assessment of the potential of the site to support protected species were undertaken and the findings of the surveys reported here. There is also an assessment of the current ecological status of the site and the ecological impacts of the proposal as well as recommendations for avoidance, mitigation and enhancement.

1.3 The existing site is a residence for young people. The proposal is to demolish the existing building and create specialist accommodation for older people, with multi-storey buildings and gardens.

2. Methodology

2.1 The habitat survey involved describing and mapping the site using modified Phase 1 survey methodology used in Greater London (LEU 1994). Habitats are shown in Figure 2. A list of the plant species recorded from the site is presented in Appendix 1. Common plant names are used in the text, and both common names and scientific names (which follow Stace 1997) are used in Appendix 1.

2.2 A protected species assessment was also made, examining suitable habitat features for protected species within the site or evidence of protected species (eg badger, reptiles, bats and breeding birds).

2.3 Fieldwork and reporting for the habitat survey was undertaken by Gary Grant FCIEEM, who is a qualified and experienced ecologist. The timing of the survey (August 2014) was considered ideal for the purposes of characterising the habitats present. Plants that flourish early in the season may have been overlooked, however.

2.4 This report also refers to a data search undertaken by GiGL. GiGL prohibits reproduction of its report, however its findings are referred to in this report.

3. Site Context

3.1 The site is rectangular, approximately 2,100m^2 in area, bounded by Prince Arthur Road on the southern side and Fitzjohn's Avenue to the east. The northern and western boundaries are with adjacent suburban residential properties. Most of the site consists of a modern multi-storey residential complex, with shrubberies and occasional trees along the frontages and a small garden at the rear.

3.2 The adjacent area is suburban. Hampstead Underground station and the commercial centre of Hampstead is approximately 300m to the north. Adjacent streets are suburban and residential with houses and mature gardens.

3.3 There are no statutory nature conservation sites within 1km of the application site.

3.4 Hampstead Heath, the nearest large area of semi-natural vegetation, covers 318 hectares and is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. It is approximately

500m to the north-east at its nearest point. Hampstead Heath has grasslands, woodland and a bog.

3.5 Branch Hill is a Site of Borough Importance Grade 1, covering 3.72 hectares. It consists of allotments, grassland, tall herbs, shrubberies, scrub and woodland. It is approximately 600m to the north-west of the application site.

3.6 Hampstead Parish Churchyard is another Site of Borough Importance Grade 1. It is 0.9 hectares in extent and includes acid grassland, shrubberies, scattered trees, tall herbs, vegetated walls and tombstones. It is approximately 250m to the north-west of the application site.

3.7 The edge of a complex of railside land of Borough Importance Grade 1, including Kentish Town City Farm, Gospel Oak Railsides, and Mortimer Terrace Nature Reserve is 900m to the east of the application site. These areas, which cover a total of 6.72 hectares, include woodland, scrub, grassland, tall herbs, a wildlife garden and pond.

3.8 Another railside complex in West Hampstead (West Hampstead Railsides, Medley Orchard and Westbere Copse) is a Site of Borough Importance Grade 1. These sites cover 7.94 hectares and consist of orchards, woodland, scrub, grassland and tall herbs. At their nearest point, these sites are approximately 800m to the south-west of the application site.

3.9 Belsize Wood Local Nature Reserve is 0.7 hectares of woodland, scrub and tall herbs. The site is of Borough Importance Grade 2 and is approximately 1km to the south-east of the application site.

3.10 Frognal Court Wood is 0.2 hectares of woodland. It is a site of Borough Importance Grade 2 and is approximately 700m to the south,south-west of the application site.

3.11 Frognal Lane Gardens is a 0.55 hectares site of Local importance. It is 600m to the west of the application site and consists of a private wooded garden with a small pond.

4. Survey Results

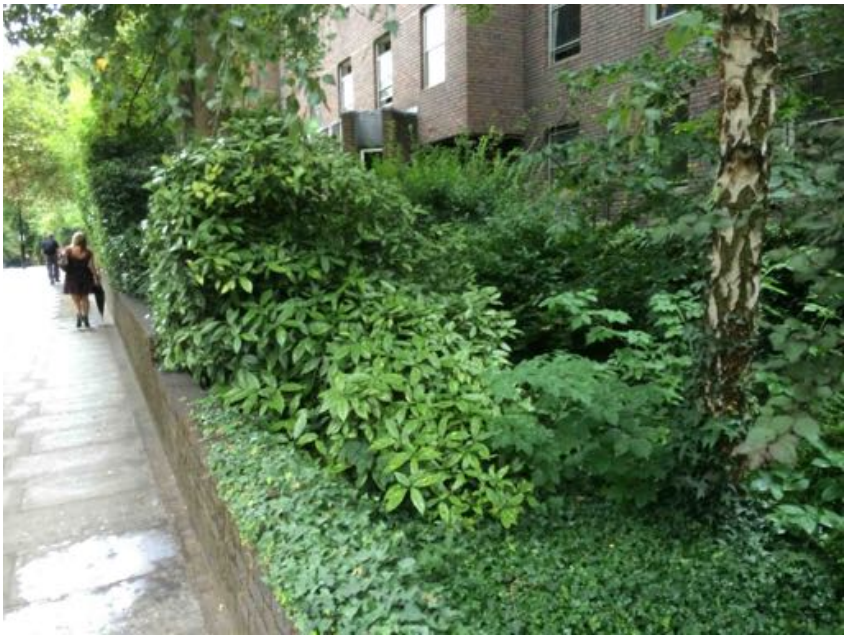
Habitats and Vegetation

4.1 A habitat plan of the site is presented as figure 2 (over the page). Habitats are described below. A full list of the plant species recorded from the site is given in Appendix 1.

4.2 Most of application site, approximately 74% or 1550m^2 consists of a large multi-storey building which dates from the 1980s. The building is clad in brown brick, and has a paved courtyard. There is a small garden at the rear and planting beds along the street frontages, covering a total of 550m^2. The garden covers approximately 360m^2 and the planters, 190m^2.

4.3 The raised planters have been planted with a variety of trees, non-native shrubs and ground cover plants. Trees in the planters include beech *Fagus sylvatica*, holm oak *Quercus ilex* and silver birch *Betula pendula*. In addition that are small self-sown specimens of sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, butterfly bush *Buddliea davidii*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and silver birch. The bulk of the vegetation in the planters consists of non-native shrubs, including spotted laurel *Aucuba japonica* and tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*. There are also plantings of small conifers and bamboo. Ground cover is predominantly ivy *Hedera helix*.

4.4 The garden consists of an amenity grassland lawn, with cultivated beds, a few trees and a planted border. The amenity grassland is dominated by perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, with occasional daisy *Bellis perennis*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*,and greater plantain *Plantago media* amongst others. The shrubbery is dominated by spotted laurel and ivy. A paperbark birch *Betula papyrifera* is planted in the lawn and there is a sycamore in the border. A cabbage palm *Cordyline australis* also occurs in the garden. Ivy is the predominant ground cover in the border. Pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* grows alongside the path at the entrance to the garden.



Roadside planter with shrubbery and trees

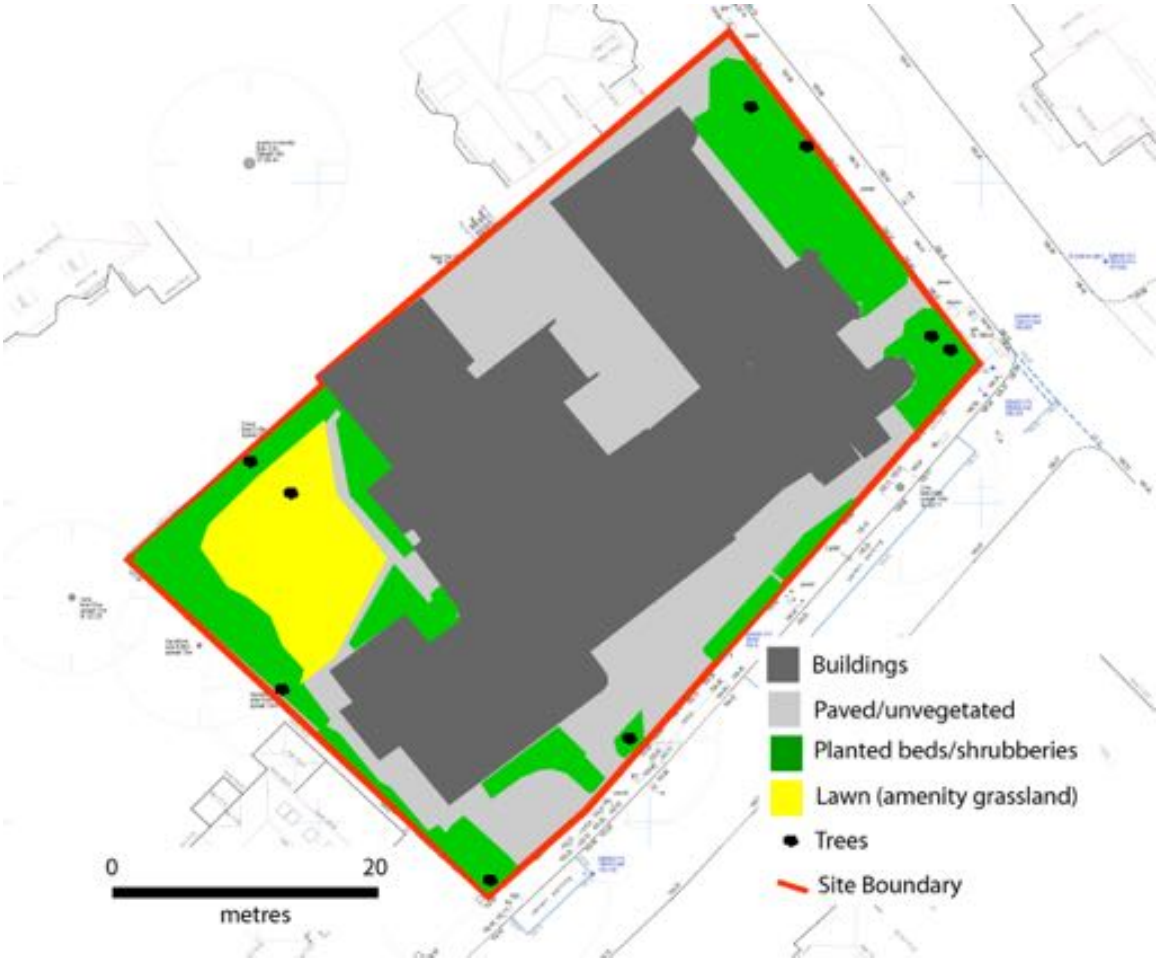
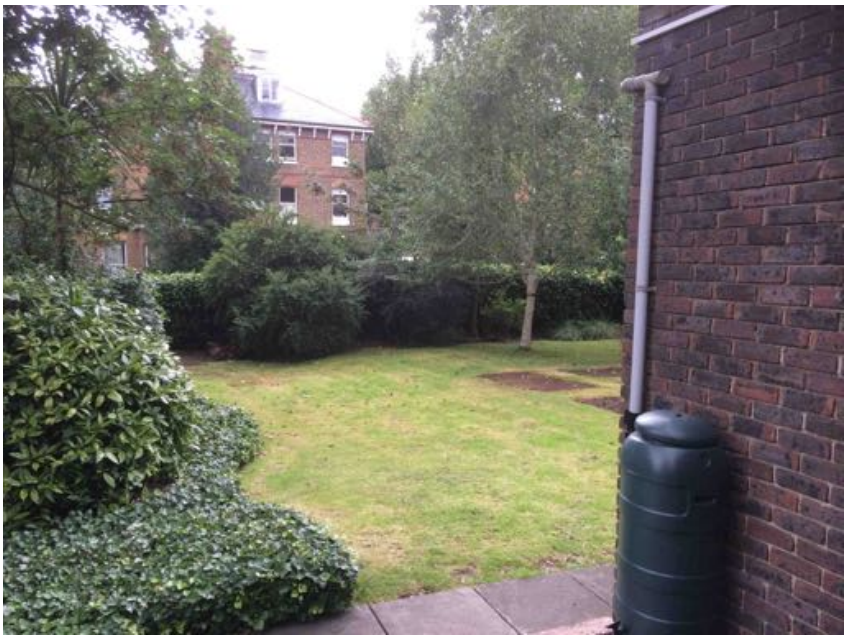


Figure 2. Habitats



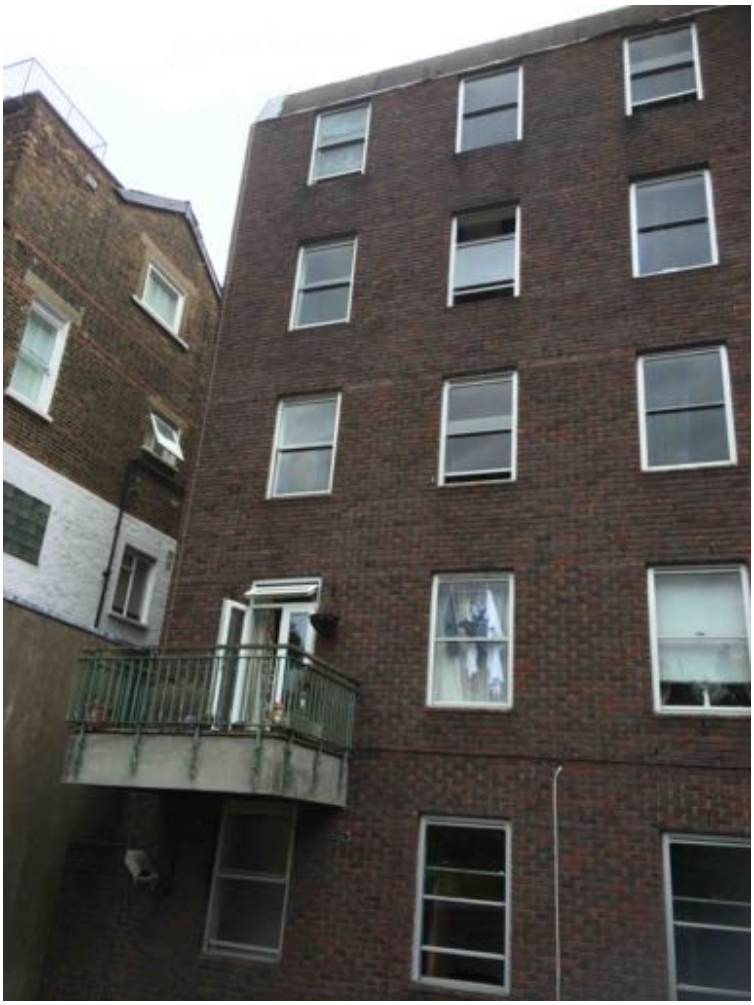
Rear garden with lawn (amenity grassland), beds, shrubbery/border, trees

Protected Species

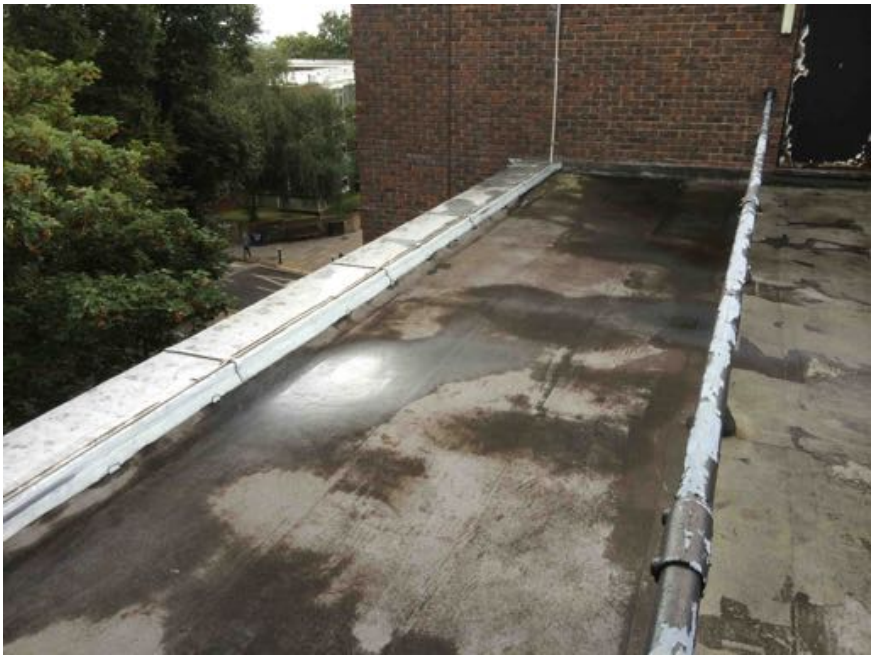
4.8 'Protected species' are defined as those afforded protection from disturbance, killing or harm under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The site was inspected for evidence of protected species (including badgers, reptiles, bats and breeding birds).

Bats

4.9 The building is a flat roofed building of modern construction. It was inspected from the outside, from the roof for signs of bats or features that could be used as roosts. No features which could be used as roosts were observed and there were no signs of bats. The risk of bats using the building is considered to be low. GiGL have records of bats occurring within 1km of the site, including noctule, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat and Daubenton's bat. Pipistrelle bats have been recorded within 250m of the application site and it is likely that bats are active in the vicinity and possible that bats feed over the garden.



Modern well-maintained building with no features likely to be used as roosts by bats



Roof of existing building

Badger

4.10 There are no records of badger in the immediate vicinity and no evidence of badger was found on site.

Reptiles

4.11 The habitats on site are unsuitable for reptiles. The site is isolated from sites that support reptiles. The risk of reptiles occurring on site is low.

Birds

4.12 The shrubberies provides cover for nesting birds. It is likely that a few pairs of bird breed on site.

Great crested newt

4.13 The site does not include ponds and the vegetation on site is isolated from other areas of habitat by roads. The risk of great crested newt occurring on site is low.

5. Site Evaluation

5.1 Approximately 74% of the site is unvegetated with hardstanding. Those areas are of negligible ecological value. The shrubberies provides habitat for wildlife, including, possibly, breeding birds.

5.2 Sites can have ecological value ranging from international and national importance (for example SSSIs), to Metropolitan value, Borough value and down to local value and finally un-vegetated sites of negligible value. Given the presence of the gardens and shrubberies vegetation, which may support nesting birds, those sections of the site is considered to be of 'low local' value for nature conservation.

6. Impacts

6.1 The scheme involves the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a number of multi-storey buildings and gardens. Some of the existing vegetation, of low local value, will be lost. The clearance of shrubs could result in the loss of nesting sites for birds.

6.2 Provided the recommendations (see 7 below) are conscientiously implemented, in particular, the biodiverse extensive green roofs, the ecological impacts of the development are predicted to be beneficial.

7. Recommendations for Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancement

Hedges and Trees

7.1 It is recommended that existing trees on the perimeter of the site are retained wherever feasible. New tree and shrub planting should include native species or species with a documented value for wildlife in order to increase ecological value and provide feeding opportunities for wildlife.

Biodiverse Extensive Green Roofs

7.3 Inaccessible roofs can be vegetated with a range of drought tolerant wild flowers, which will constitute a similar habitat to that which currently occurs on site. Further details on how to create extensive green roofs that benefit wildlife are available from BugLife – The Invertebrate Conservation Charity. See http://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Creating%20Green%20Roofs%20for%20Invertebrates_Best%20practice%20guidance.pdf

Bats

7.2 Although no bat roosts have been found on site, it is likely that bats occur in the vicinity. Artificial roosts for bats are recommended. These features can be incorporated into new buildings or on posts erected for this purpose. Self-cleaning purpose-made woodcrete boxes are recommended (e.g. Schwegeler).

7.4 Outdoor lighting in the new development should be kept to a minimum necessary for safety and security. The use of bat-friendly low UV lighting with zero upward or lateral light spillage is recommended. See http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bats_and_lighting.html

Birds

7.5 Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to disturb nesting birds or damage their nests or eggs. The main bird-nesting season occurs between March and July (and in some cases through to September). Clearance and management of undergrowth during that period should be avoided. If such works are unavoidable, checks should be made by a suitably qualified and experienced person to ensure that the affected areas do not support nesting birds.

7.6 Nesting boxes for house sparrow, robin, tits and other birds that use artificial boxes can be installed on north facing walls and trees.

Management & Enhancement

7.7 Management of the gardens should be sympathetic to wildlife, with a relaxation of the cutting to allow wildflowers and wildlife to flourish in some areas. Wildflowers should be cut annually in late summer with cuttings removed for composting. Hedges and shrubs should not be cut during summer months to allow birds to nest without disturbance.

Supervision & Monitoring of Works

7.8 Contractors should be reminded of their obligations and responsibilities with respect to wildlife. They should be informed of these recommendations, and works monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced person to ensure compliance. If protected species are discovered unexpectedly on site during works, works should cease and further detailed advice should be sought from the project ecologist.

References

London Ecology Unit 1994. Habitat Survey for Greater London

Stace, C. 1997. New Flora of the British Isles. Cambridge University Press.

Appendix 1

List of plants noted during Phase 1 survey

Scientific name	Common name	DAFOR
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	O
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	O
Arrhenatherum elatius	False oat grass	O
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping bent	O
Bellis perennis	Common daisy	O
Betula pendula	Silver birch	R
Buddliea davidii	Butterfly bush	O
Capsella bursa-pastoris	Shepherd's-purse	R
Carex pendula	Pendulous sedge	O
Cirsium arvense	Creeping thistle	R
Clematis vitalba	Clematis	R
Conyza canadensis	Canadian fleabane	O
Dactyls glomerata	Cocksfoot	LA
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	R
Festuca rubra	Red fescue	O
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	R
Hedera helix	Ivy	LD
Ilex acquifolium	Holly	O
Lactuca virrosa	Lettuce plant	R
Lamium purpureum	Red dead nettle	R
Lolium perenne	Perennial rye grass	LD
Plantago media	Greater plantain	O
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort plantain	O
Poa annua	Annual meadow-grass	O
Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal	O
Rubus fructicosus	Bramble	O
Salix caprea	Goat willow	R
Sambucus nigra	Elder	O
Senecio vulgaris	Common groundsel	R
Sonchus oleraceus	Smooth sow thistle	O
Stellaria media	Chickweed	R
Taraxacum officinale agg	Dandelion	O
Trifolium repens	White clover	O

D = Dominant
A = Abundant
F = Frequent
O = Occasional
R = Rare

L = Locally