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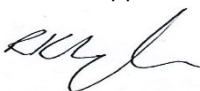
Date
November 2016

Project Number
UK11-23583

THE HALL SCHOOL, LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN ECOLOGY REPORT

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Project No. **UK11-23583**
Issue No. **2**
Date **15/11/2016**
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Version Control Log

Revision	Date	Made by	Checked by	Approved by	Description
1	05/09/2016	LS	RN	RN	First draft issued to client
2	15/11/2016	LS	RN	RN	Final

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ramboll Environ UK Ltd (Ramboll Environ) was commissioned by GVA Bilfinger on behalf of the Hall School ('the client') to undertake an ecological survey of the The Hall School Middle School buildings at Crossfield Road, London Borough of Camden ('the site') in advance of a planning application to redevelop the site. The site is located in a suburban area with residential and retail developments, roads and established gardens, at grid reference TQ269844.

The site is being redeveloped, with part of the existing building proposed to be demolished, and a new school hall building built in the southern area of the site. The tree in the courtyard and the older part of the main building will be retained. The purpose of the survey was to identify the habitats present and to assess the presence or likely presence of protected or notable species at the site, and if present, to identify the species and estimate the numbers present. The survey report is required to inform a planning application and BREEAM ecology assessment of the site.

2. METHODOLOGY

A daytime external and internal inspection of the buildings and surrounding area of the Site was undertaken on 19th August 2016 by Laura Sanderson MCIEEM CEnv of Ramboll Environ. Laura has a BSc in Zoology and an MSc in Wildlife Management and Conservation, is licensed to survey for bats in England (Natural England number CLS00969), and has been working as a professional ecologist since 2005.

The weather during the survey period was warm with light drizzle and wind. The survey involved a site walkover and preliminary assessment of key habitats, land use and ecological features, particularly focusing on areas of natural interest which will be affected by the proposed development. The main habitats present were recorded using standard Phase 1 habitat survey methodology as described in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010)¹. The site was inspected for signs of invasive plant species subject to legal controls. The site was assessed for its potential to support protected and notable species such as birds and bats. This was in order to identify potential ecological constraints and to guide recommendations for further survey requirements for these species, if appropriate. In accordance with the guidance outlined in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016²) the building was assessed for its potential to support bats.

¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit. JNCC Peterborough

² Collins, J. (ed.), 2016. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

3. LIMITATIONS

Due to the small, suburban nature of the site and the predicted low level of impact from the redevelopment, a desk study using locally recorded data was not considered necessary. The level of survey effort undertaken on the Site is in accordance with relevant guidance and Ramboll Environ is satisfied that the results provide a robust assessment of the ecological status of the site. If any action or development has not taken place on this land within twelve months of the date of this report, the findings of this survey should be reviewed and may need to be updated.

4. RESULTS

The site comprises a main building dating to circa 1900, with a newer extension to the south and a building known as Wathen Hall to the southeast. There is a small amount of landscape planting and street trees on the western front-side of the buildings, and a playground courtyard with artificial turf and a mature London plane *Platanus x hispanica* tree to the east. The courtyard is surrounded by gardens with mature trees, introduced shrubs, climbers and lawns.

The main building is made from brick, is three to four storeys high and has a pitched roof with tiles and dormer windows. There is a glass and metal atrium roof within the central area of the main building. The southern extension has a flat accessible roof with roof pods, and the Wathen Hall building is linked to this via a single storey roof terrace with planters. Wathen Hall is a single storey brick building with a flat felt roof. Planters on the roof terrace contain introduced shrubs including Japanese aralia *Fatsia japonica*, rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*, plum *Prunus* sp. and horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*. The northwest front-side of the site has introduced shrubs including box *Buxus sempervirens*, ivy *Hedera helix*, rose *Rosa* sp., *Pelargonium* sp., wood sorrel *Oxalis* sp., holly *Ilex aquifolia*, Japanese aralia, bay laurel *Laurus nobilis* and copper beech *Fagus sylvatica*, covering an area of approximately 16 m². The southeast front has a garden infill with a flat felt roof. Street trees to the west include London plane and Norway Maple *Acer platanoides*.

In the courtyard area a number of climbers overhang the site from adjacent gardens, but are not growing within the site itself. These include ivy and non-native climbers.

The introduced shrubs have nectar-producing flowers suitable for use by common invertebrate species.

Bird species recorded on the site during the survey included carrion crow *Corvus corone* and blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*. Birds recorded in the adjacent gardens included blackbird *Turdus merula*, goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. No evidence of nesting birds was recorded on the site. The only suitable nesting habitat for birds is the mature London plane in the courtyard and the introduced shrub and street trees on the western front-side of the building.

The buildings have no crevices or openings suitable for use by roosting bats, and all tiles and roof areas are intact. The site is likely to be of limited suitability for use by foraging bats, due to the small amounts of vegetation present. Further surveys for bats are not considered necessary. The gardens in the surrounding area are more suitable for use by small numbers of foraging bats.

The site is not considered to be suitable for use by any other protected or notable species.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

All wild birds are protected whilst nesting, with disturbance and destruction of active nests constituting an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). If removal or pruning of the introduced shrub to the west front-side of the building or the London plane tree is required, this should be undertaken during September to January, which is outside of the bird breeding season, or following checks for nesting birds. If active nests are identified, work should be delayed until the nests are no longer active.

Impacts on roosting bats are not anticipated as a result of the redevelopment of the site. Night time lighting of the eastern side of the building during the construction phase should be minimised, to reduce impacts on foraging bats.

Enhancements could be included within the development for the benefit of biodiversity. These could include:

- provision of further landscape planting, climbers around the playground area or a green roof with nectar-producing flowers to benefit invertebrate species such as bees and butterflies;
- provision of bird boxes close to areas of vegetation or on the London plane tree; and
- provision of bat boxes built within the wall of building or attached to external sides, close to areas of vegetation.

In conclusion, the site is of relatively limited value to biodiversity, with vegetation used by common invertebrate species and some potential for nesting birds and foraging bats. No bat roost locations were identified. Mitigation in relation to these species should include undertaking work outside the bird nesting season and minimising night time lighting of the east side of the site. No further ecological constraints to development were recorded on the site. Enhancements for biodiversity can be made as described above.

This report is suitable to support a planning application for development of the site.

6. APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: Front (west) side of site, with street trees and introduced shrub in front of building.



Photo 2: Roof of the main building, with the older northern section to the rear and right of the photo, and the southern newer part and the atrium to the front.



Photo 3: Artificial turf playground to east of site, with climbers and trees in adjacent gardens.



Photo 4: East side of main building.



Photo 5: Mature London plant to east of main building, and single-storey Wathen Hall building behind this.