the ecology partnership

The Ecology Partnership
Thorncroft Manor, Thorncroft Drive
Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 8JB

T +44 (0) 1372 364133
E info@ecologypartnership.com
W ecologypartnership.com

Peter Reilly

Construction Project Manager

GOSH Development and Property Services

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust

12th July 2017

Dear Peter,

Biodiversity Assessment and Walkover Survey on land at the Italian Hospital, Boswell Street, WC1

Many thanks for instructing The Ecology Partnership Ltd to undertake a biodiversity assessment and walkover survey of the above site. This letter of report presents the results of the walkover survey and internal and external inspection for bats and nesting birds and recommendations for the redevelopment of the site.

Site Context and Status

The site is a currently an active part of Great Ormond Street Hospital. The Italian Hospital was constructed in 1898 and is located on the corner of Boswell Street and Queen Square, central London, WC1N 3AJ. The grid reference for the site is TQ 304818

The proposals are understood to include the refurbishment of the entire building with significant internal alterations and minor infill extensions. On the first floor a Nature Trail Terrace, which will provide open space within the settings of the hospital will be created to replace the current outside space associated with the nursery.

Works to the roof include renewal of the roof finishes and railings and extending a limited area of the mansard roof with a slate finish to provide screening from plant and PVs. The attic will house additional plant. The dome, which is located above the chapel, will have the lead finish renewed.

The red line boundary of the building which is subject to alterations is highlighted in figure 1.

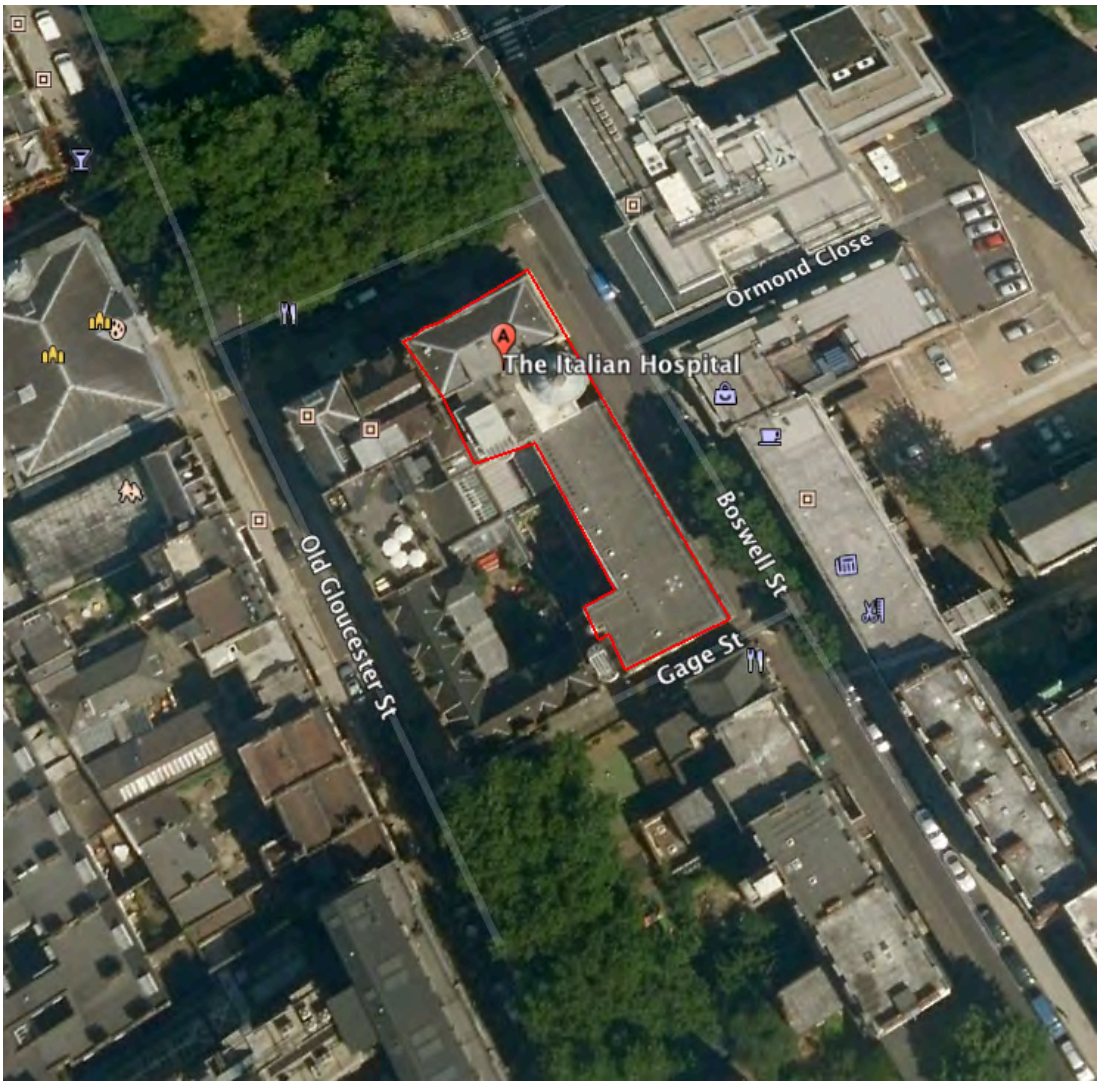


Figure 1: Approximate red line boundary and survey area

Legislation

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006), *"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity"*. In order to comply with this 'Biodiversity Duty', planning decisions must ensure that they adequately consider the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development.

National policy guidance is provided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Section 11 of the document is entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'

Bats are covered by the following relevant legislation: The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended); the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000; the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006); and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010).

Under the WCA 1981 it is an offence to:

- intentionally, recklessly or deliberately disturb a roosting or hibernating bat i.e. disturbing it whilst it is occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection)
- intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost (i.e. a structure or place used for shelter or protection).

Under the CHSR 2010 it is an offence to:

- deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat
- intentionally, recklessly or deliberately disturb a bat, in particular (i) any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; (ii) any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability in the case of hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or (iii) any disturbance which is likely to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place (roost) of a bat.

Methodology

Desktop Study

A 2km desktop study search was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites and one internet-based aerial mapping service (www.earth.google.co.uk) was used to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features (such as ponds, woodlands etc) within the wider landscape.

Site Assessment

The site was visited on the 11th July 2017. The site was walked and all external sections of the site were assessed during the course of the visit including the roof network.

An internal and external bat survey was undertaken on 11th July 2017 by The Ecology Partnership ecologist Alexia Tamblyn MA (Oxon) MSc CEnv MCIEEM FRGS bat licence holder. The surveyor undertook an internal and external examination of the building including any accessible roof voids. The surveyor assessed the building visually and searched for evidence such as:

- Staining beneath or around a hole caused by natural oils in bat fur;
- Bat droppings beneath a hole, roost or resting area;
- Bat droppings and/or insect remains beneath a feeding area;
- Audible squeaking from within a hole;
- Insects (especially flies) around a hole; and
- Dead bats.

The buildings on site was accessed during the day. An external investigation assessed the roofing materials and structural timber joints of the building. This was undertaken in order to see if there were access points readily available for bats to utilise or crevices that bats could be roosting in.

Limitations

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. The site was visited over the period of one site visit, as such seasonal variations cannot be observed.

The bat assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on site, based on the suitability of the habitat and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time when the survey was carried out. Additional surveys may be recommended if, on the basis of this assessment it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

Results

The site is situated in central London, located between Queen Square and Boswell Street. The surrounding environment is highly urbanised and developed with limited green infrastructure, albeit Queens Square which supports a group of London Plane (*Platanus* × *acerifolia*) located opposite the hospital, and a small public park which extends northwards.

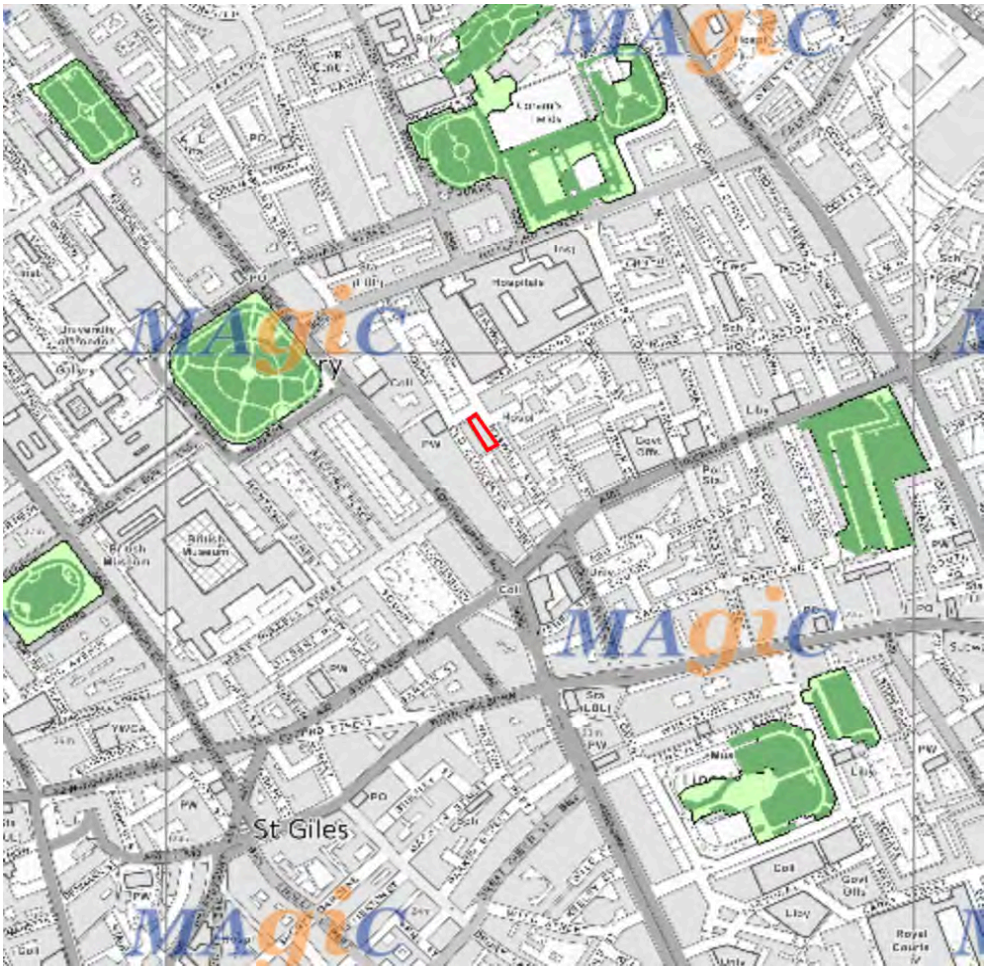


Figure 2: Woodland and parkland habitats surrounding the site (identified in red).

Map produced by MAGIC on 12th July 2017. © Crown Copyright and database rights 2015. Ordnance Survey 100022861. Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGIC is a snapshot of information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the documentation for details, as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

A recent review of bat licences in the wider landscape highlight two bat licences granted for properties within 3km. The closest of which is located approximately 600m to the north west of the site and was a common pipistrelle roost, although not a maternity roost. The second bat licence is approximately 2.5km to the east of the site in Shoreditch, and again is for a common pipistrelle roost. This was not a maternity roost.

Internal and External Inspection

The redevelopment of the site will not extend beyond the current footprint of the hospital building. As such there is no land loss, alteration or fragmentation of the local landscape. The site supports only two limited areas of open space, set within the curtilage. The first, being the open space associated with the nursery. This is dominated by play items, and only incidental planting. The second area is located around the vaults and refuse area, associated at basement level. Here there is a small paved area with seating and some planting (evergreen specs such as spotted laurel (*Aucuba japonica*)). Neither of these areas of external space were considered to be of local importance for any local wildlife.

The flat roof area of the building was walked during the survey to assess its use for nesting birds. No nesting birds were recorded during the day of the survey and no old nests were identified on the flat roof or on the plant roof.

All accessible roof spaces were internally and externally surveyed for evidence of bat species. There was one internal roof void, 'the attic', located on the northern aspect of the site. The attic was accessed through a window, providing the internal environment with a bright light source. This section supported wooden beams, old water tanks and flumes with the room internally lined with sarking boards. There was thick insulation on the base of the attic. No evidence of this section of the building being used by bats was identified. No droppings, wing cases or other evidence of bats was recorded.

Externally the building did not support features such as hanging clay tiles or weatherboarding which are often associated with crevice dwelling bat species. The attic area supported slate tiles which were well sealed and did not support any potential opportunities for bats. No external evidence of bats was found and the building was considered to have 'negligible' potential to support roosting bats.

The vaults and storage and waste disposal rooms within the basement of the building, were all well sealed with no possible access for species such as bats or birds.

The site's location within a densely populated area of London, with a lack of good foraging habitat or connectivity to suitable off site habitat reduces the likelihood of bats using the site significantly.

The site had limited potential for wildlife. The site was predominantly comprised of building and hardstanding, with some individual plants growing through cracks in the hardstanding. The site itself lies within a dense urban environment, surrounded by residential and commercial development. The site is not directly connected to any habitat of notable ecological value and it is considered highly unlikely that protected species are present onsite

Discussion

The habitats on site are common and widespread in urban areas throughout the local area and throughout the UK as a whole. The habitats are considered to be of negligible ecological interest with the site only containing no features of ecological importance, even at a site level.

None of the sections of the building on site were considered to have suitable features to support roosting bats. The buildings on site contained predominantly flat roofs and did not possess suitable roosting features often exploited by roosting bats such as hanging tiles or external weatherboards or soffit boards. No gaps within brick works or suitable features for crevice dwelling bats were noted.

There was one roof void on site. This was both internally and externally assessed during the survey. No evidence of roosting bats was found to be present and it was considered that the attic did not support a roost.

The main building on site was occupied at the time of survey and was subject to regular levels of human activity. It must also be noted that the site is situated within a densely urban environment, with limited suitable habitat for bats within the local area. This significantly reduces the likelihood of bats being present at site. Although some tree lines and small areas of green space in the form of communal gardens and church grounds are the surrounding habitat is considered sub-optimal habitat and is considered not to support a bat population of any significant numbers.

As such no further bat surveys are recommended and the works to the buildings on site are not considered to be constrained by roosting bats.

The flat roofed areas, extending along the southern section of the building, had some potential to support nesting bird species. However, no evidence of birds' nests were found during the survey, and no evidence of regular use by birds was found won the dome or indeed on the flat roofed section of the building. As such it is currently considered that the building is not constrained by nesting bird species. However, it is recommended that any works to the roof are preceded by a check for nesting birds, if works do occur within the nesting bird season which runs March – September inclusive. It is also recommended that in order to prevent birds nesting prior to works, that bird netting can be established above the building.

Conclusions

The buildings within the redline boundary at The Italian Hospital are to be redeveloped and renovated. The proposals for the site will involve the reconfiguration of the roof areas, including the attic, but largely the work is located within the building itself. The outside space, which is currently being used for a nursery play area is also to be redesigned to provide a more natural area.

The buildings were not considered to be of ecological value. No features of interest were recorded within the site, with only small areas of amenity planting, confined to pots and of amenity value were located. As such it is considered that the redevelopment of the building is not constrained by valuable habitats.

The surveys did not find any evidence of bat using any of the buildings as an active roost. No droppings, staining or feeding remains were found. Externally, the building was considered to be suboptimal for roosting bats with negligible crevice opportunities. The building as a whole was considered to be of negligible value to bats and the redevelopment works are not considered to be constrained by roosting bats and no further survey works are recommended.

The flat roofed areas do have potential to support nesting birds. No nests were observed at the time of the survey and no evidence of active use was identified. As such the roof currently is not constrained by nesting birds.

It is therefore considered that redevelopment works are no restricted by protected habitats or species and no further ecological input is required.

If you require any further details. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Alexia Tamblyn MA (Oxon) MSc CEnv MCIEEM FRGS

Managing Director

Appendix 1: Photographs of the Site:

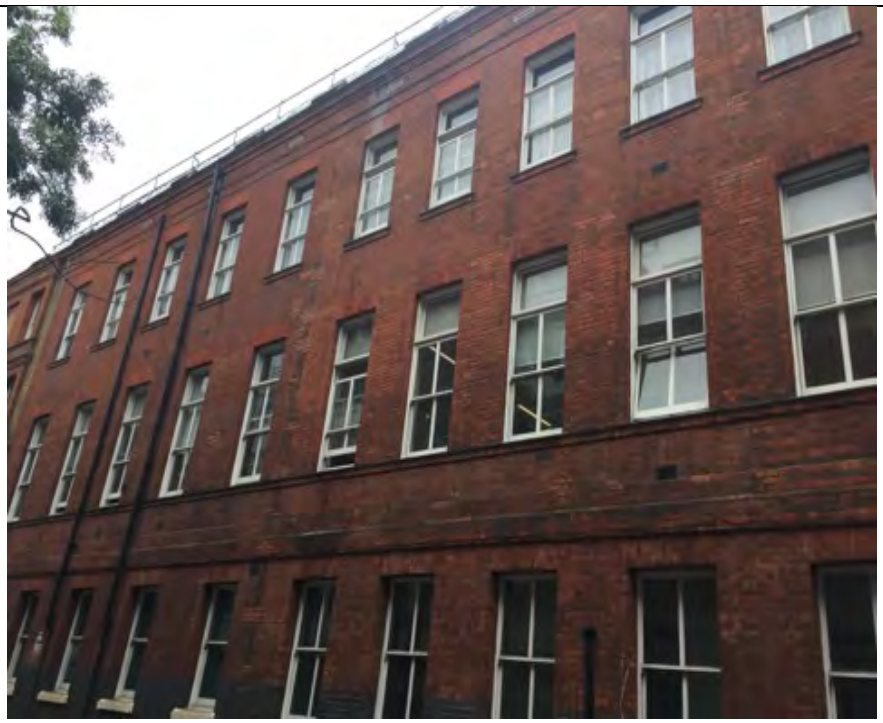
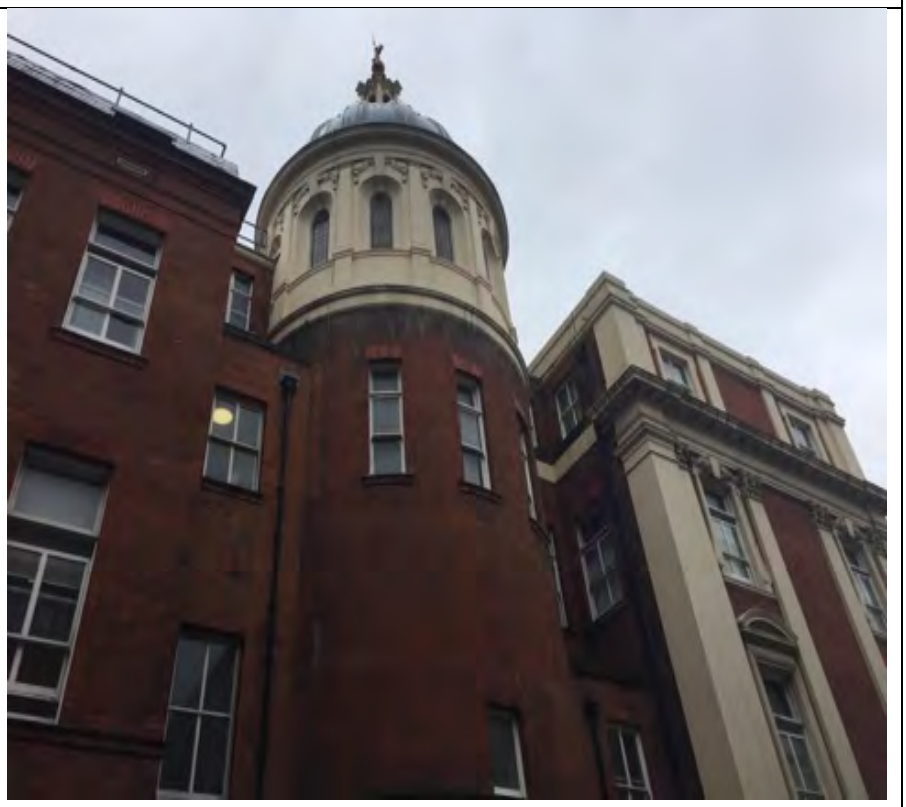
Photo 1: The external features of the building	
Photo 2: The dome features which is located above the chapel.	

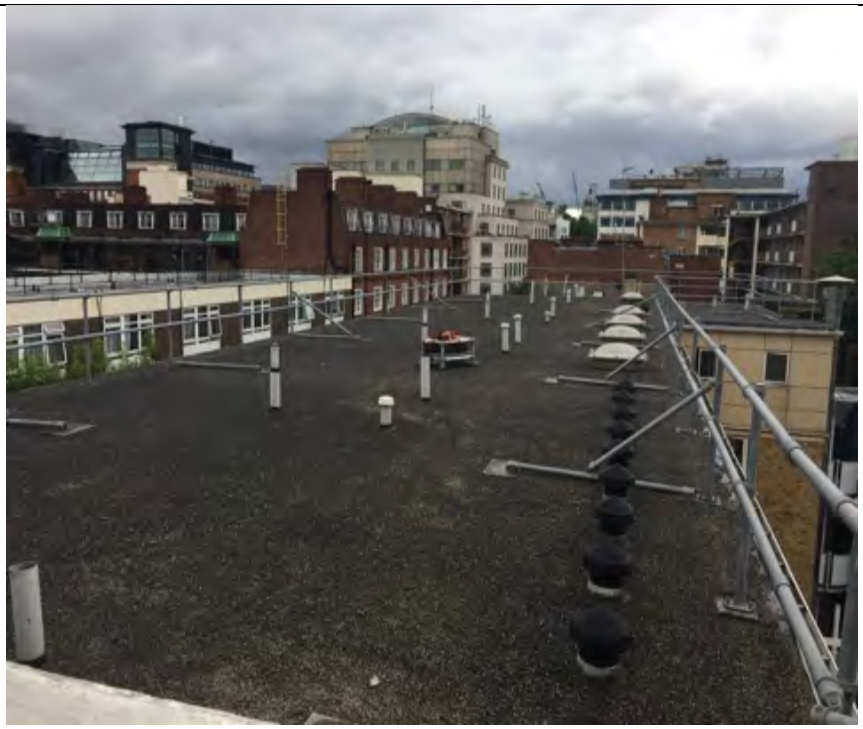
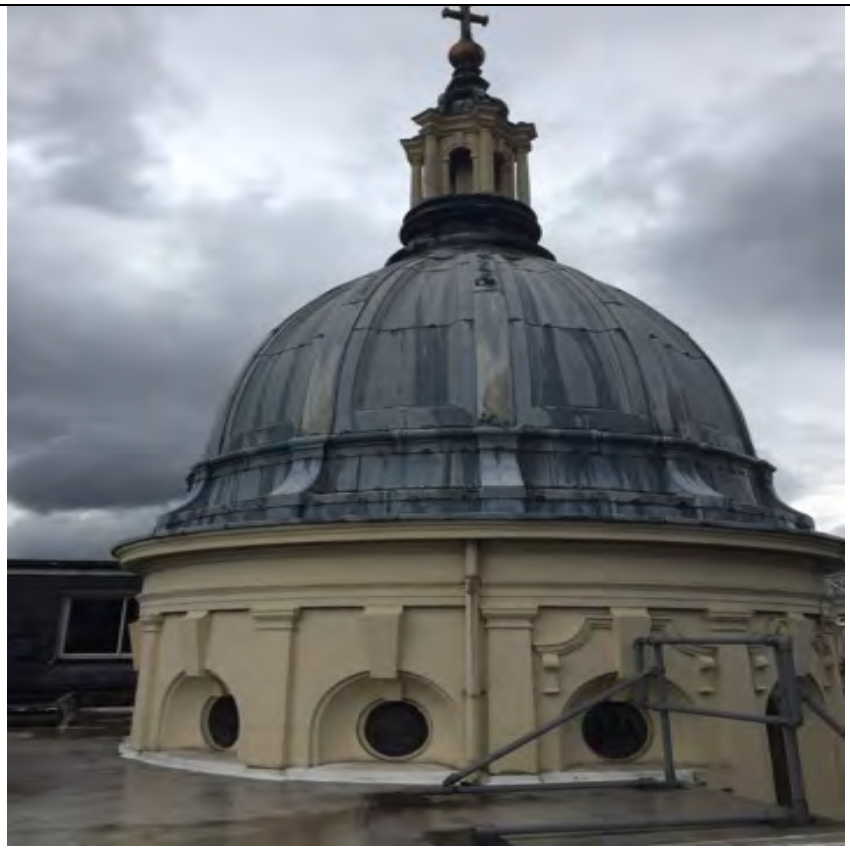
Photo 3: The southern section of the building which is flat roofed – no nesting birds identified.	
Photo 4: A close up view of the dome above the chapel- no nesting birds identified.	

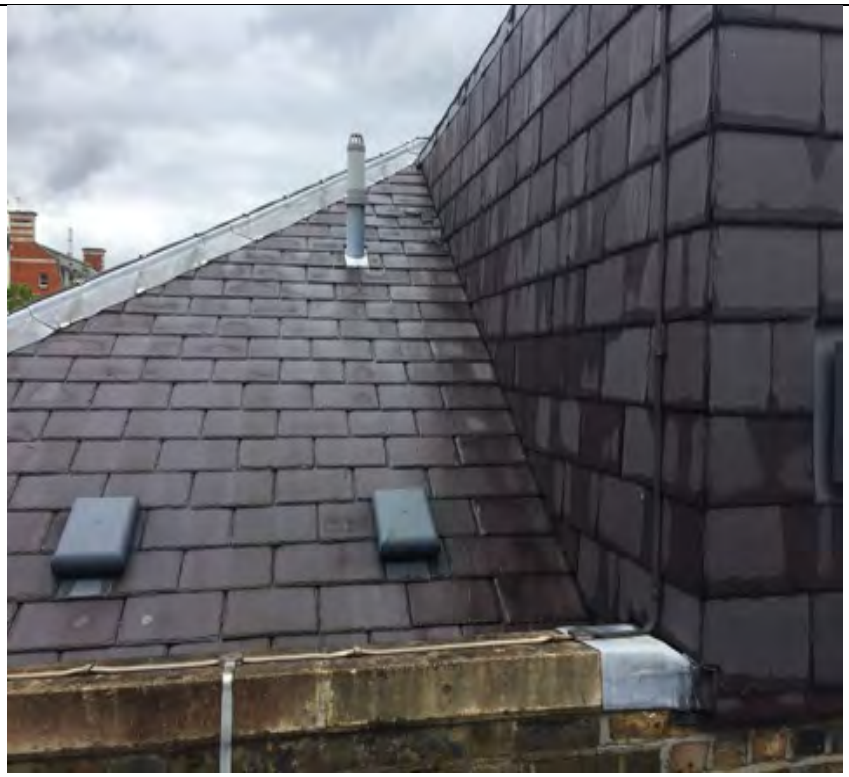
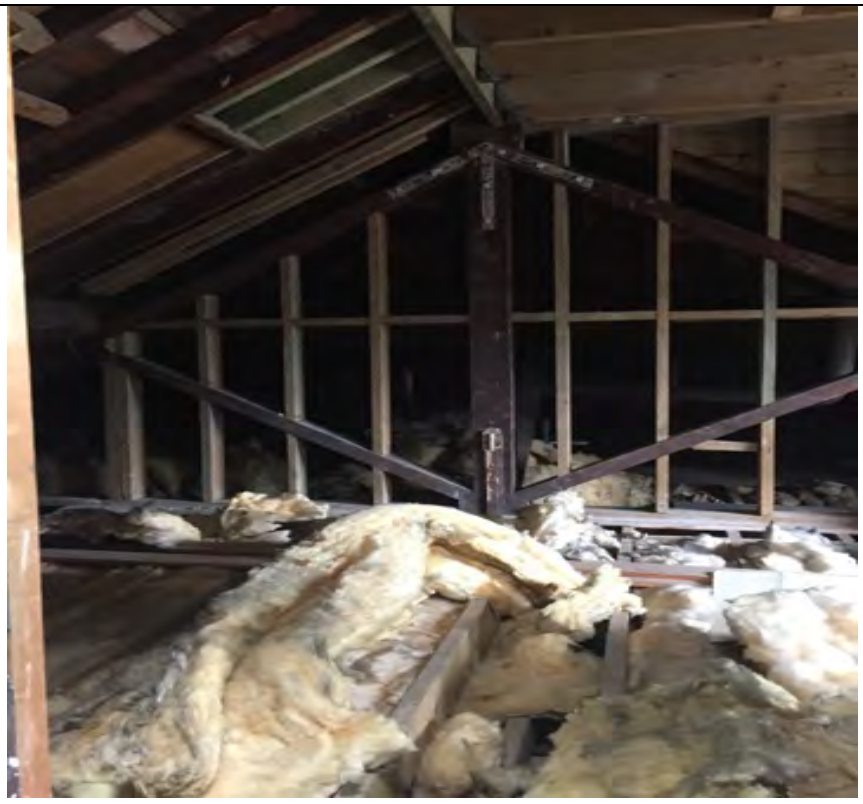
Photo 5: External view of the attic section – slate tiles were well sealed and flush.	
Photo 6: Inside the attic, which was light and open. No evidence of roosting bats found.	

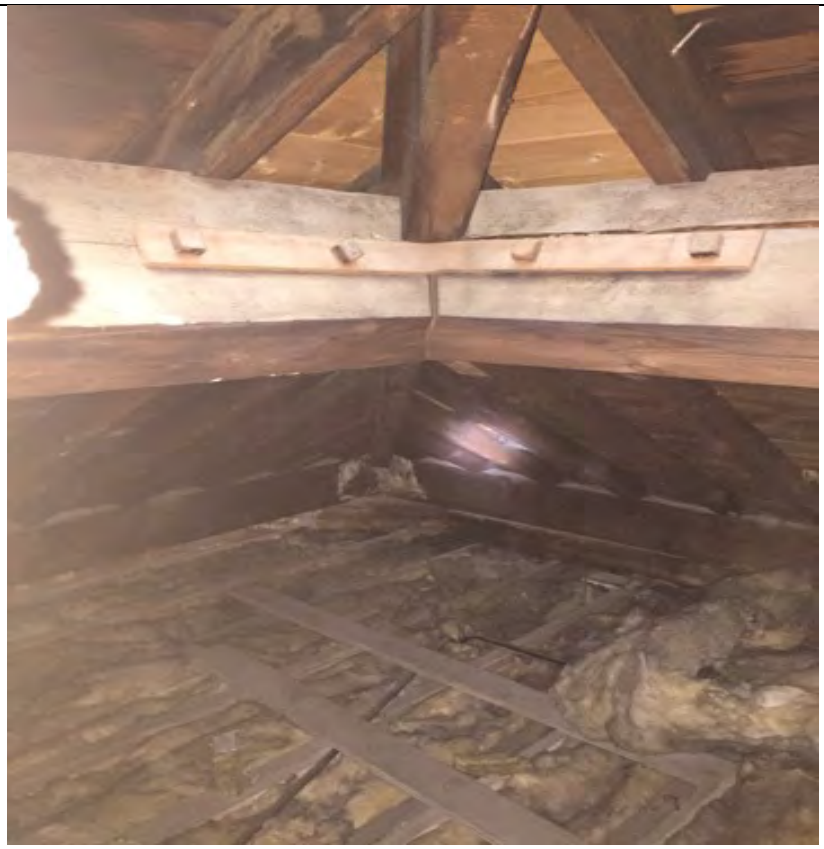
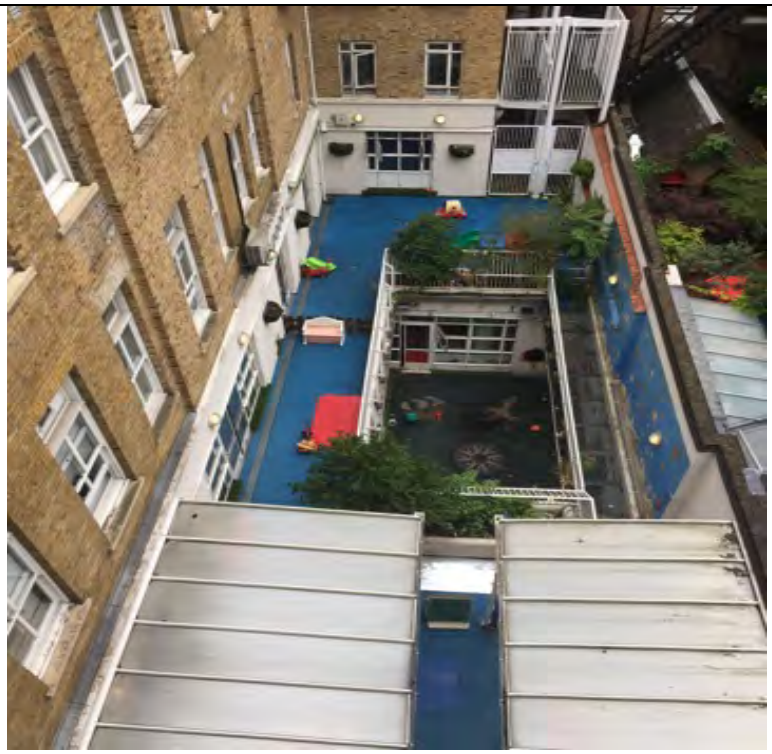
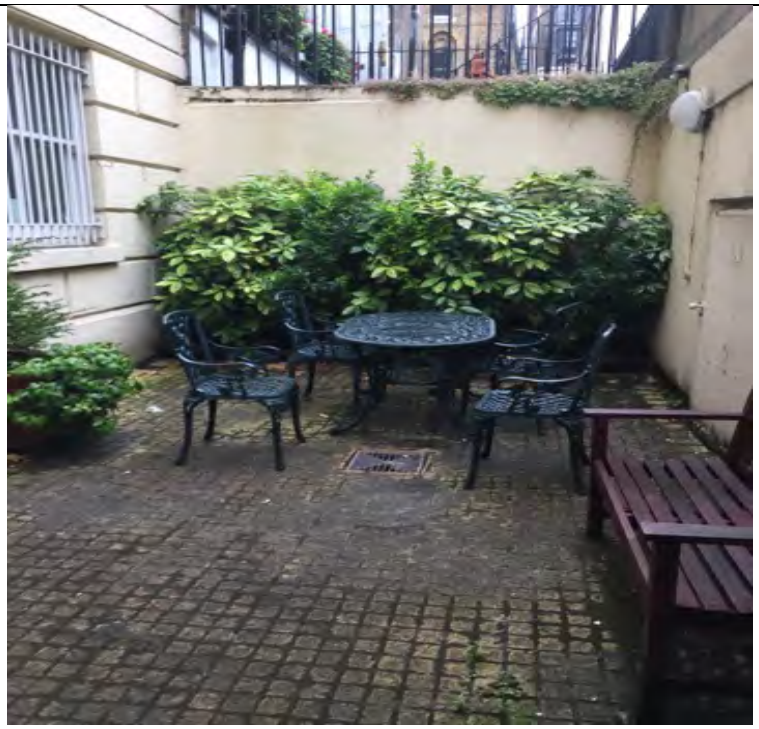
Photo 7: Close up of some of the internal sections of the attic. No evidence of roosting bats was found.	
Photo 8: The external play area associated with the nursery. This is to be redesigned as a more natural outside space.	

Photo 9: The small seating area at basement level	
Photo 10: The well sealed vaults. .