

Ecology Briefing Note

Bourne Court, Ruislip



August 2018

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This technical note has been prepared by CSA Environmental on behalf of **c/o Richard Henley at HGH Consulting** in relation to Bourne Court, Ruislip, HA4 6SW (hereafter referred to as, 'the Site'). It summarises the findings of a desk study and extended Phase 1 habitat survey, undertaken in August 2018 and identifies confirmed and potential ecological constraints to residential development. Proposals are understood to comprise redevelopment of the site to provide 109 self-contained residential units in two blocks, together with access, car and cycle parking, refuse storage, communal and private amenity space and new landscaping

2.0 Methods

- 2.1 An extended Phase 1 Habitat survey of the Site was undertaken by Michelle Bullock MCIEEM on 08 August 2018, in order to assess the on-site habitats and their potential to support notable and protected species. The survey, encompassing the Site and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed, was conducted in dry, fine weather conditions.
- 2.2 Details of statutory designations of nature conservation interest were retrieved from the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Trees

- 2.3 A detailed inspection of all trees at the Site was undertaken from ground level to (i) identify Potential Roosting Features such as rot holes, cavities and split limbs, and (ii) locate any evidence of bats such as live or dead specimens, bat droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining, feeding remains (e.g. moth wings) and/or squeaking noises. The inspections were carried out systematically around all parts of the tree, from all angles and from both close to the trunk and further away. Equipment used included a ladder, endoscope, high-powered torches and close-focusing binoculars, as appropriate.
- 2.4 Following inspection, each tree was categorised in terms of its bat roost potential ('High', 'Moderate', 'Low' or 'Negligible'), based on the

criteria set out in the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines (Collins, 2016).

3.0 Nature Conservation Designations

- 3.1 No internationally important statutory designations of nature conservation interest lie within 10km of the Site and no nationally important statutory designations of nature conservation interest lie within 3km of the Site.
- 3.2 Six local statutory designations of nature conservation interest are present within 3km of the Site as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Statutory Designations within search radii

Site Name & Designation	Distance & Direction from Survey Area	Special Interests or Qualifying Features
Local Designations within 3km		
Islip Manor LNR	c. 0.9km south-east	Comprises wet meadow and a species-rich mosaic of different grassland types.
Yeading Woods LNR	c. 1.8km south-west	Comprises a small meadow, river bank and coppiced woodland
Yeading Brook & Meadows LNR	c. 2.3km south-west	Comprises a species-rich wildflower meadow. Supports an abundant invertebrate assemblage.
Northolt Manor LNR	c. 2.5km south-east	Comprises meadows, scrub, woodlands, wetlands, ponds and small lakes.
Ruislip LNR	c. 2.5km north	Supports species-rich willow carr, tall fen and swamp communities. Woodland with areas of acidic grassland, neutral grassland and open heath add to habitat diversity.
Yeading Meadows LNR	c. 2.5km south-west	Comprises oak plantation over hazel coppice which adjoins the flower-rich Yeading Brook Meadows.

- 3.3 The above designations are adequately buffered by distance to avoid any direct impacts arising from the proposed development. Indirect effects, such as from increased recreational pressure, are possible. However, given the separation of these designations from the Site by distance and the relatively small increase in residents (109 units) arising from the proposed scheme, no significant adverse effects arising from the proposed development are anticipated.

4.0 Habitats and Flora

Hardstanding

- 4.1 The Site is dominated by hardstanding and rubble piles left from demolition of the buildings previously present at the Site. Much of the hardstanding is beginning to recolonise with vegetation comprising common and widespread species, predominantly tall ruderal species

and grasses. Occasional recolonising scrub and climbers are present at the Site boundaries. This habitat is not considered to be of significant ecological importance.

- 4.2 Three species listed on the London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI, 2014) are present at the Site, namely butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii*, cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and a very small area of cotoneaster *Cotoneaster* sp. in the northern corner. Butterfly-bush and cherry laurel are listed under Category 3 of the initiative which includes species of high impact or concern which are widespread in London and require concerted, coordinated and extensive action to control/eradicate. *Cotoneaster* sp. is listed under Category 2 of the Initiative which includes species of high impact or concern that require attention (control, management, eradication etc). In addition, five species of Cotoneaster are listed under Schedule 9 part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to cause to grow in the wild any plant listed under Schedule 9 Part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). As such, all relevant precautions should be taken when carrying out actions that could potentially spread these plants.
- 4.3 The government has set out guidance on what can be considered “causing to grow in the wild” within a response to the Schedule 9 review (DEFRA/WAG, 2009) which states:

“We would expect that where plants listed in Schedule 9 are grown in private gardens, amenity areas etc., reasonable measures will be taken to confine them to the cultivated area so as to prevent their spreading to the wider environment and beyond the landowner’s control. It is our view that any failure to do so, which in turn results in the plant spreading to the wild, could be considered as ‘causing to grow in the wild’ and as such would constitute an offence.... Additionally, negligent or reckless behaviour, such as inappropriate disposal of garden waste, where this results in a Schedule 9 species becoming established in the wild would also constitute an offence.”

- 4.4 However, it should be noted that because of the difficulties in distinguishing cotoneaster species and the limited availability of flowering/fruiting material, it was not possible to make an identification with absolute certainty.
- 4.5 It is recommended that measures are undertaken to control/eradicate cherry laurel, butterfly-bush and cotoneaster within the site e.g. during site clearance works any waste material should be disposed of responsibly, i.e. properly composted or taken to a municipal recycling centre.

Trees

- 4.6 Occasional trees are present at the Site, predominantly semi-mature Leyland cypress *Cupressus × leylandii* forming a line of trees to the centre of the Site. Other trees present at the Site are predominantly located at

the Site boundaries and comprise semi-mature and mature broadleaved species including both native and introduced species.

- 4.7 The majority of trees at the Site boundaries will be retained. However, there will be some losses to trees towards the centre of the Site to facilitate the development. These losses will largely be to groups of Leyland cypress which are considered to be of negligible ecological importance. Nonetheless, a low number of trees of elevated ecological importance including a mature apple *Malus* sp. and semi-mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and box-elder *Acer negundo* will be lost to facilitate site access and the built development. As such, compensatory planting will be undertaken in this respect within the shared amenity areas. Newly planted trees as part of the proposed scheme will include native varieties and/or varieties of importance to wildlife, including fruit trees.
- 4.8 All retained trees will be protected during construction in accordance with arboricultural best practice (BS5837: 2012), thereby ensuring the longevity of these trees within the Site.

5.0 Fauna

Bats

- 5.1 The majority of the Site, being dominated by hardstanding, is considered to offer negligible opportunities for foraging/commuting bats. The occasional trees present at the Site afford some limited opportunities for common and widespread species to forage and/or navigate through the Site. However, given the relatively poor suitability of habitats present at the Site coupled with the largely built-up nature of the surrounding landscape, the Site is considered unlikely to represent a significant foraging resource or provide significant navigational features for use by bats. In addition, no potential roosting features were recorded in association with any of the on-site trees and as such all trees have been assessed as being of 'Negligible' suitability for roosting bats. No significant impacts to bats are anticipated as a result of the proposed development.

Other Mammals

- 5.2 Given the habitats present and the largely built-up nature of the surrounding landscape, save for hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, the Site is considered unlikely to support any other protected or notable mammal species. Given the adjacent residential gardens, it is possible that hedgehog may pass through the Site on occasion. However, foraging and sheltering opportunities at the Site for this species are limited. As such, the Site is considered unlikely to be of significant ecological importance for hedgehog.

- 5.3 Fox *Vulpes vulpes* was recorded at the Site at the time of survey. However, this species is common and widespread and its presence at the Site is not of significant ecological interest.

Birds

- 5.4 A single wood pigeon *Columba palumbus* was recorded at the Site at the time of survey, within a group of Leyland cypress. The trees and occasional scattered scrub at the Site provide nesting opportunities and foraging resources for use by a range of common urban garden birds. However, the Site is not considered to be of significant ecological interest for this group.
- 5.5 Nonetheless, based on their legal protection, any clearance of potential nesting habitat (such as removal of trees/scrub) will be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (i.e. outside of March-August inclusive), or immediately following confirmation by a suitably qualified ecologist that no active nests are present.

Reptiles

- 5.6 The Site and immediately surrounding habitat is largely unsuitable for reptiles, and as such they are considered likely-absent from the Site.

Amphibians

- 5.7 The Site and immediately surrounding habitat is largely unsuitable/sub-optimal for amphibians such as great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*. In addition, a review of OS mapping and aerial photography has identified no ponds within 500m of the Site. As such, amphibians, including great crested newt are considered likely-absent from the Site.

Invertebrates

- 5.8 Given the brownfield habitats present at the Site, including mounds of aggregate and ephemeral vegetation, there is potential for the Site to eventually support a significant invertebrate assemblage. However, the Site has not yet developed sufficient interest in this regard, given the relatively short time since demolition and clearance works. As such, at present, the Site is not anticipated to support an invertebrate assemblage of particular interest. Opportunities for enhancing the Site for invertebrates are set out below.

6.0 Opportunities for Ecological Enhancement

- 6.1 The following opportunities for ecological enhancement have been identified:
- Inclusion of native plant species and species of acknowledged benefit to wildlife within the landscaping scheme.

- New tree planting, within shared amenity areas to increase the overall tree cover at the Site above the present situation and to improve connectivity of green infrastructure.
- Provision of new bat roosting opportunities: A minimum of 3 No. bat boxes will be erected on suitable trees and/or integrated within the new buildings. These will be a purpose-built, durable and long-lasting variety such as those available from Schwegler or Habibat.
- Provision of new bird nesting opportunities: A minimum of 5 No. bird nesting boxes will be installed on retained trees and/or integrated within the new buildings to benefit generalist bird species. These will be a purpose-built, durable and long-lasting variety such as available from Schwegler or Habibat.
- New habitat creation for invertebrates: The scheme layout affords the opportunity to create enhanced habitat for invertebrates within the amenity planting area surrounded by parking bays in the west of the Site. This area should comprise a diverse structure of planting, including a range of native and near-native plants of wildlife benefits (particularly those from Fabaceae, Lamiaceae, Crucifers and Asteraceae, as well as structural plants from Poaceae), with plants selected to provide a long flowering season for nectar- and larval food-plants, as well as hard landscaped areas of aggregate (e.g. sand, chalk, gravel) to provide micro-climatic conditions for invertebrates to bask and dig.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The majority of the Site is of negligible ecological importance. Some losses to trees will be required to facilitate the development and as such compensatory planting will be provided as part of the new development. Further, the overall tree cover present at the Site will be increased above the present situation.
- 7.2 Measures are required to safeguard retained trees and nesting birds and to prevent the spread of invasive non-native plants during Site preparation/construction works.
- 7.3 Opportunities for ecological enhancement of the Site are also set out herein.
- 7.4 No overriding ecological constraints to development have been identified.

8.0 References

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

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 1990. *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit*. Revised reprint, 2010. Peterborough: JNCC.

LISI (Nov 2014). *London Invasive Species Initiative – Species of Concern*.

Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), 2013. *Interactive Map*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>> [Accessed August 2018].

Appendix A

Photosheet



Photo 1. Hardstanding and rubble piles in west of Site



Photo 2. Hardstanding, recolonising ground and trees in east of Site



Photo 3. Recolonising hardstanding in north of Site



Photo 4. Recolonising hardstanding in east of Site and line of Leyland cypress



Photo 5. Hardstanding and trees in east of Site



Photo 6. Rubble piles in west of Site

Appendix B

Habitats and Flora Species List

Flora Species List			
SITE ref. & NAME		3965 - Bourne Court, Ruislip, HA4 6SW	
DATES OF SURVEY AND SURVEYORS		1. 08/08/2018 MJB	
Latin name	Common Name	HABITAT TYPE	
		Hardstanding	Trees
Herb species			
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	X	
<i>Alcea</i> sp.	Hollyhock	X	
<i>Antirrhinum</i> sp.	Snapdragon	X	
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Mugwort	X	
<i>Calystegia</i> Sp.	Bindweed	X	
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	X	
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle	X	
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great willowherb	X	
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert	X	
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood avens	X	
<i>Helminthotheca echinodes</i>	Bristly ox-tongue	X	
<i>Lactuca virosa</i>	Great lettuce	X	
<i>Lavandula</i> sp.	Lavender	X	
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common bird's-foot-trefoil	X	
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common mallow	X	
<i>Papaver</i> sp.	Poppy	X	
<i>Persicaria maculosa</i>	Redshank	X	
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	X	
<i>Polygonum</i> sp.	Knotgrass	X	
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	Dock	X	
<i>Senecio</i> sp.	Ragwort	X	
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet	X	
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth sow-thistle	X	
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	Scentless mayweed	X	
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle	X	
Sedges and rushes			
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous sedge	X	
Grasses			
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat-grass	X	
<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	Wall barley	X	
Woody species			
Coniferous			
<i>Picea</i> sp.	Spruce	X	
Broadleaved			
<i>Acer negundo</i>	Box-elder		X
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore		X
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver maple		X
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver birch		X
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly-bush	X	
<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i>	Indian-bean-tree		X
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	X	
<i>Cotoneaster</i> sp.	Cotoneaster	X	
<i>Cupressus</i> x <i>leylandii</i>	Leyland cypress		X
<i>Eucalyptus</i> sp.	Eucalyptus		X
<i>Fallopia baldschuanica</i>	Russian-vine	X	
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	X	X
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	X	
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly	X	
<i>Malus</i> sp.	Apple		X
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry laurel	X	
<i>Rosa canina</i> sp.	Dog-rose	X	
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	X	
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	X	
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry	X	