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6 October 2022

Our ref: 223189/ARB

Mr E Gadsden
W.E. Black Limited
Hawridge Place
The Vale
Hawridge
Chesham
Buckinghamshire
HP5 2ZD

Dear Mr Gadsden

LAND TO THE REAR OF 25-31 WARREN ROAD, ICKENHAM

Introduction

In accordance with your instructions, AA Environmental Limited (AAe) carried out an ecological survey of the above site on Tuesday 17 May 2022. The purpose of the survey was to determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas and to record any evidence of protected species. This information will serve to assess the ecological impact of the proposals and identify any ecological constraints and/or mitigation measures that may be required. A series of photographs has been attached for reference.

The proposals are to construct four dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping. The majority of the established trees, which are on the boundary, will be retained.

Methodology

Baseline Data

As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated.

Walk-over Site Survey

During the walk-over survey, particular attention was paid to record the presence of badgers, bats and herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) that may be using the site or present in adjacent habitats, in accordance with the following survey methodologies:

Badgers
Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected by the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992,* under which it is an offence to harm badgers or their setts. A sett is defined as "*any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger*". Natural England has provided the following guidance on the interpretation of current use:

A sett is defined as such (and thus protected) as long as signs indicative of 'current use' are present. Thus, a sett remains protected by the Act until such times as the signs (i.e. 'field signs') have deteriorated or decayed to such an extent that they indicate that the sett is no longer in 'current use'.

A thorough survey of the whole site and adjacent habitats, where access was available, was carried out. Particular attention was paid to dense areas of vegetation to check for any evidence of badger activity, which is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- presence of holes with evidence of badger, such as footprints, discarded hair, etc.;
- presence of dung pits and latrines;
- presence of well-used runs with subsidiary evidence of badger activity; and
- presence of other indications of badger activity, such as signs of foraging and footprints.

Bats

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats, or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities. The survey was carried out following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust[1] and by an experienced and licensed ecologist[2]. A thorough internal and external examination of any building present was carried out, with any potential access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces were accessed to check for any evidence of bats.

In addition, a careful inspection of each tree on the site was carried out to identify those features that are important for roosting bats. Surveying trees presents particular problems at any time of the year as bats will use a wide variety of roost sites in cavities, splits, cracks, knotholes and under loose bark, many of which are not easily detected from the ground.

Each tree was assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- **Negligible** – negligible habitat features likely to be used by roosting bats.
- **Low** – a tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features (PRFs) but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
- **Moderate** – a tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
- **High** – a tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

[1] Collins, J. (ed) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
[2] Lead surveyor was Alan Beaumont, BSc. (Hons), MSc., MCIEEM

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. A heterodyne bat detector (Pettersson D200) was also used during the inspection to record any bat calls.

Herpetofauna

Amphibians
All amphibian species have some level of protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

Reptiles
All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of *Section 9(1)* and all of *Section 9(5).* This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.

An assessment of the site was carried out to determine its suitability for herpetofauna by recording the habitats present. In addition, any natural/artificial refugia present on the site was lifted to check for any sheltering animals or evidence of animals, such as sloughs (shed skins).

Other Wildlife
In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

Results

Baseline Data

According to the Multi-agency website, there are no ecological statutory designated sites located on or directly adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory designated site is Frays valley Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Frays farm meadow (SSSI), located approximately 705 m to the east of the site. According to the Multi-agency Website there are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) located on or adjacent to the site. The closest HPI was an area of Broadleaved Woodland, located c. 106 m to the south of the site

Site Description (Photographs 1-4)

The site is located off Heythrop Drive, Ickenham, centred at National Grid Reference: TQ 065857 and covers approximately 0.2 of a hectare.

Species recorded in the lawns were typical of amenity grassland and included perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), clovers (*Trifolium spp.*) and cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). Species within the remnant gardens included bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), common nettle (*Urtica dioica),* common ivy (*Hedera helix*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense),* herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare),* cleavers (*Galium aparine*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), dock (*Rumex sp.*), white bryony (*Bryonia dioica),* lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum),* ground-elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) and hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). Ornamental species included lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), wilson's honeysuckle (*Lonicera nitida*), stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium),* snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

There is also self-seeded sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), willow (*Salix sp.*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) also present. A lawson's cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) hedge was present along the eastern and northeast boundary. Individual mature and semi-mature tree species recorded included oak (*Quercus sp.*), lawson's cypress, horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), plum (*Prunus domestica*) and hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*).

Badgers

No evidence of badger or their setts was recorded on or adjacent to the site, however some evidence of fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) were recorded including a mammal run, scat and some disused mammal holes.

Bats

There was a single timber shed recorded on the site with a pitched felt roof, which was in a poor state of repair. No evidence of bats was recorded and the shed was assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats.

Most of the trees were assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats due to their age, species and lack of any obvious PRFs. The mature oak and horse chestnut provide **low** roosting opportunities for bats. The site, due to its restricted size and location within a residential area provides only limited foraging habitat for bats.

Herpetofauna

There were no ponds on the site and therefore no breeding opportunities for amphibians. The site, being a residential plot (with a certain amount of site clearance completed) and essentially 'land-locked' and surrounded by residential development and/or roads does not provide any connectivity to suitable habitat that any species could colonise the site. In addition, despite a careful search of the site, no species of herpetofauna was seen or found sheltering under any refugia lifted.

Other Wildlife

Apart from the fox previously mentioned and a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposals are to construct four dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping. The majority of the established trees, which are on the boundary, will be retained.

There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded.

Although there are considered to be no ecological constraints to the proposals, a series of generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, should be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021[3].

[3] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London.

Although no evidence of bats was recorded, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. Although the majority of the established trees are schedule to be retained, if any of the trees assessed to provide low roosting opportunities are to be felled, then the works should be completed by competent tree surgeons that are fully conversant with current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Therefore, site clearance works should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season, which, in general, runs from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a check should be carried out prior to any clearance works to ensure there are no active nests present.

All mammals are protected under the *Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996* and, therefore, prior to any site works a check should be made to make sure there are no active fox earths present on the site. The use of an animal repellent, such as Scoot, can be used to facilitate this.

In order to protect any established vegetation to be retained, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'. The retention and protection of the established vegetation will help to maintain existing commuting/foraging routes currently utilised by wildlife.

As part of the proposals, soft landscaping will be carried out. Where any new planting is proposed it should aim to use native species, but where this is not practicable then species of known value for wildlife can be used. In particular, flowering plants will be of benefit to invertebrate species and shrubs and trees may provide nesting opportunities for birds once they become established.

Any new boundary treatment should be designed to promote permeability of the site to minimise fragmentation and allow free movement of wildlife throughout the site, for example by strengthening/enhancing the existing boundary vegetation, planting up a series of new hedgerows and/or installing post and rail fences. These measures will strengthen habitat connectivity and provide additional foraging habitat, cover and nesting opportunities. If close boarded fences are required for security reasons these should be minimised and raised slightly off the ground (c. 150-200 mm) to allow animals to pass underneath.

The site could be further enhanced by providing roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a range of species and the creation of new wildlife habitats, such as some of those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Ecology Environment and Management's recently published Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Guidance, and listed below:

- Nest boxes
- Bug hotels
- Hedgehog houses
- Bat boxes
- Log piles
- Pollinator nest sites
- Planting wildflowers

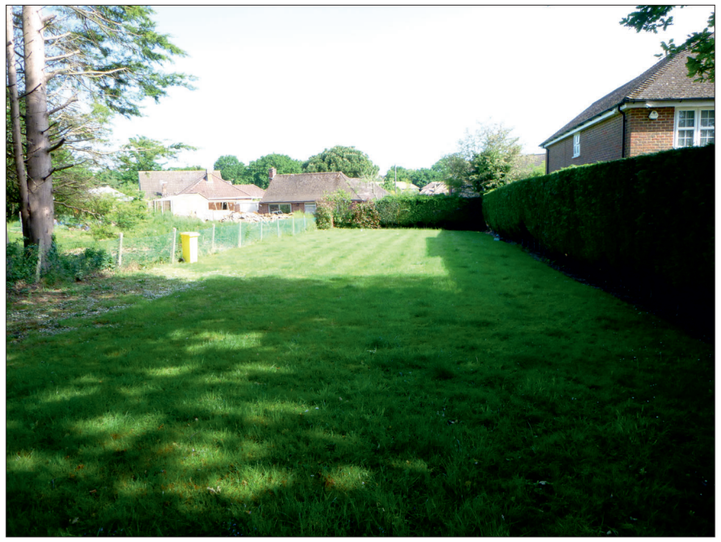
The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. Although the site currently experiences some light spillage from on-site sources, neighbouring properties and roads, in accordance with good practice, any new lighting to be introduced should be designed to minimise light spillage and pollution and not directed onto any wildlife boxes installed or onto the adjacent vegetation, which should remain dark.

The recommendations provided above try to pre-empt any issues that may arise as well as provide some mitigation and enhancement measures. I trust this is of interest to you and provides the Local Planning Authority with enough information to determine the application but let me know if further clarification is required.

Yours sincerely

Alan Beaumont
MSc BSc (Hons) MCIEEM
Class Licences CL08 and CL18

Encl. Photograph Record Sheet (Drg. No. 223189/01)



Photograph 1: Showing the area of well-maintained lawn recorded on the site.

Photograph 2: Showing the recently cleared areas on the site.

Photograph 3: Showing the recently cleared areas on the site.

Photograph 4: Showing the timber shed recorded on the site.

Rev.	Details	Drawn / Chkd.	Date

PROJECT

Land to the rear of
25-31 Warren Road
Ickenham

TITLE

Photograph Record Sheet

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Environmental Consultants

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NTS	06.10.22	223189/01	
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