TECHNICAL NOTE: ECOLOGY

June 2023

Garages and Land Adj to Railway
South Worple Way
East Sheen

Application Reference: 22/3582/OUT

Report for:
Gladechester Limited
45-47 Monument Hill
Weybridge
Surrey
KT13 8RN

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been instructed by Gladechester Limited to produce a supplementary report for the above application to address the comments raised by the Councils Ecologist. This report should be read in conjunction with the letter report produced by AAe (dated March 2023). A series of photographs has been attached for reference.

The redevelopment proposals are to construct five dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing garages and clearance of the vegetation along the northern boundary of the site.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The follow-up survey was completed on Thursday 18 May 2023 by an experienced ecologist. During the follow-up survey the plant species were recorded, the potential impacts of the redevelopment proposals on species of principal importance was assessed, and the presence of/or suitable habitat for bats was recorded, in accordance with the following survey methodologies:

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 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.

[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.

- **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.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope.

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).

Nesting Birds

All species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. A survey was completed to record any active nests within the garages or vegetation scheduled for removal. A visual inspection of the area was carried out to record any signs of breeding activity, facilitated by the use of binoculars.

Stag Beetles

The stag beetle is listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention, on Appendix 2 of the Habitat Directive, on Schedule 5 of *Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, and as a Priority Species on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1995).

An assessment of the site was carried out to determine its suitability for stag beetles. In addition, natural refugia, such as rotting wood or log piles, present on the site was checked (where it was possible to do so safely) for any sheltering animals or evidence of animals, such as body parts.

Other Wildlife

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

RESULTS

Site Description (Photographs 1-4)

The site is located off South Worple Way in East Sheen, London, centred at National Grid Reference: TQ 205757 and covers less than 0.1 of a hectare. The site comprised the existing garages with associated hardstanding, with a narrow strip of scrub at the rear alongside the railway line. The site is bordered by South Worple Way to the south, railway tracks to the north, an office building to the east and a construction site to the west.

The row of garages was of prefabricated concrete construction, with shallow, single-pitched, cement bonded corrugated sheet (CBCS) roofs and metal up and over doors. Internally the garages were unlined with no separate roof spaces/voids present.

Hardstanding dominated the site, with some restricted scrub alongside the railway line, dominated by butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), with some cleavers (*Galium aparine*), green alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*), wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*) and pellitory-of-the-wall (*Parietaria judaica*). Tree species recorded along the railway line included some sapling and immature self-seeded sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and immature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). With no evidence of any invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), recorded within or adjacent to the site.

Bats

The site itself, being restricted in size, dominated by a row of pre-fabricated garages and hardstanding located in a built-up area of London, provides very limited foraging opportunities for bats. The trees located on the northern boundary of the site along the railway were all assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats, due to their age, size and lack of any PRF's. It is important to note that the vegetation alongside the railway line is self-seeded and appears to be periodically cleared/cut back (as shown on google imagery), presumably as part of the management of the railway.

Species of Principal Importance

During the previous and updated survey of the site, no evidence of any bird nests was recorded. Due to the site being of limited size, lacking any suitable terrestrial habitat and relatively isolated (the restricted vegetation at the rear of the site lacks direct connectivity with other vegetation alongside the railway line), it is highly unlikely that any stag beetles, common toads or hedgehogs utilize the site.

Other Wildlife

Apart from a few common species of bird recorded flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The redevelopment proposals are to construct five dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing garages and clearance of the vegetation along the northern boundary of the site. There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. The site is of low ecological value with no evidence of protected or notable species recorded.

Although there are considered to be no ecological constraints to the proposals, with the site remaining unchanged since the previous survey, a series of specific and generic mitigation measures, as detailed in the previous letter report and reiterated below for ease of reference, 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].

Although no evidence of bats was recorded, with the garages and trees assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities, all site operatives should be made aware of 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)*. Although no active or old nests were recorded during the survey, a check should be carried out prior to any works to ensure there are no active nests present.

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. 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
- Bat boxes
- 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 is located in a well-lit area of London, in accordance with best practice, a sensitive lighting scheme will be designed to minimise light spillage and pollution and not directed onto any wildlife boxes installed.

Overall, the findings of the ecological surveys completed would indicate that there are no ecological constraints to the redevelopment proposals. A range of standard controls are available and deliverable to ensure that there would be no adverse impact on local wildlife that are using the site with a series of controls to be implemented to avoid contravention of current legislation. We trust the additional information provided addresses the comments received so that there are no outstanding ecological objections to the proposals and that planning can be granted subject to an appropriately worded condition(s).

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

Photograph Record Sheet

Photograph 1: Showing the front of the garages, with the vegetation at the rear.

Photograph 2: Showing the self-seeded vegetation at the rear of the site.

Photograph 3: Showing the restricted vegetation located along the railway line.

Photograph 4: Showing a close-up the self-seeded sycamore trees, assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats, due to their age, size and lack of any PRF's.

Rev.	Details	Drawn / Chkd.	Date

PROJECT

Garages and Land Adj to Railway
South Worple Way
East Sheen

TITLE

Photograph Record Sheet

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Scale	Date	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	06.06.23	233076/01	

Drawn	Chkd.
NAB	ARB