St Mary's College, Twickenham Ecology Report

19th March 2007

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baker shepherd gillespie

ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St Mary's College, Twickenham

Development background

It is proposed that the existing sports hall and gym complex within the grounds of St Mary's College be refurbished internally and a new sports hall constructed on the site of the redgra (all weather, low maintenance) pitch which is currently used for car parking. The footprint of this new sports hall has been determined so that it lies entirely within the redgra pitch and beyond the Root Protection Area of a row of horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* trees to the south of the college.

Ecological enhancement measures are proposed to include a new woodland copse to the east of the new sports hall and elsewhere native parkland trees will be planted so that eventually a parkland landscape character will develop on the site.

Methodology

During February 2007, consultant ecologists from Baker Shepherd Gillespie undertook a Phase 1 habitat survey (JNCC, 2003) and bat roost assessment of the land to the south of St Mary's College and R Block buildings. A desktop study was also undertaken, utilising data from the Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) records centre, which holds records for open space and biodiversity within Greater London. Data was requested from within a 1 kilometre radius of the college to determine the extent of pre-recorded nature conservation interest close to the site.

Ecology report

The ecology report presents the results of the surveys, describes the habitat characteristics of the site, highlights any areas of conservation concern and identifies any evidence of, or potential for, protected species and their habitats. The report also discusses the need for further specific surveys and puts forward measures which can be taken to minimise adverse ecological impacts and maximise opportunities for biodiversity enhancements as part of the proposed development.

Results and assessment

The desk study revealed that there are no statutory designated sites within the 1 kilometre search area. Whilst one Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and five non-statutory designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) were identified within the search area, no direct or indirect impacts are expected to affect these sites as a result of the development, since they are well buffered by the surrounding suburban area and River Thames.

The habitats recorded during the field survey included amenity grassland, trees and hedgerows, ephemeral short perennial / ruderal vegetation and scrub. These habitats and the species they support are widespread and common, and not of conservation concern. The internal refit of R Block is not expected to have any impacts on the habitats within the site. The construction of the new sports hall is to be within the footprint of the existing redgra pitch, which has extremely limited biodiversity value, and beyond the Root Protection Area of the row of Horse chestnut trees to the south.

A variety of protected and notable species records for plants, invertebrates, reptiles, birds and mammals were obtained from the GIGL records centre. Of most significance were records for bats and stag beetle, since potentially suitable habitat for these species exists

in close proximity to the proposed development site. However, since the scope of the proposed development will not affect these habitats, direct impacts are not expected to affect these species. Some indirect impacts may affect roosting bats if they are present within the trees adjacent to the redgra pitch; however these can be reduced through appropriate mitigation and are not viewed to be significant constraints to the development.

The bat roost assessment established that there was no evidence for bats and little or no potential for roosting bats found in any of the surveyed buildings that make up R Block. Thirteen trees were assessed as having varying potential to support roosting bats, the majority of these were within the row of horse chestnut trees to the south of the site.

Habitat suitable for breeding birds was recorded on the site, predominantly within mature trees which are outside of the proposed development footprint. A small number of semi-ornamental trees close to R Block which are expected to be lost to the development also have some limited potential to be used by nesting birds and should be checked for nests by an appropriately qualified ecologist prior to their removal. The subsequent habitat enhancement will more than compensate for the loss of these trees.

Recommendations for mitigation and enhancement

Mitigation recommendations include minimising potential indirect impacts on roosting bats and undertaking the removal of potential breeding bird habitat outside of the breeding bird season.

Enhancement recommendations include planting trees and species-rich hedgerows throughout the overall site, with species selection being preferentially for native species. It is also recommended that bird and bat boxes be put on suitably sized trees and new buildings. Sympathetic management of the site for stag beetle could also be put into place as an additional means by which the value of the site to wildlife can be maximised.

Conclusion

Overall it is considered that the negligible impact to the existing habitats on site, which are of low conservation value, is greatly offset by the benefits the development will bring. In particular the proposed new trees, the new woodland copse and native parkland trees will enhance the ecology of the site and bring a net gain for biodiversity. This will benefit a wide range of species including protected species, since there will be an increase in the area over which birds can forage and nest, bats can forage and roost, and potential stag beetle habitat.

Marcus Fry BSc MSc MIEEM

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site description

St Mary's College is located off Waldegrave Road, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham. The scope of the survey did not include all of the College grounds or buildings, focussing instead on a plot of land approximately 3.5 hectares in area to the south of the College and R Block, centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference TL 157 719. The surveyed land (the "site") is situated within a suburban area where the land use is predominantly residential. The Phase 1 habitat survey concentrated upon the southern section of the college and the bat survey focussed upon R Block and associated trees around the buildings. The site is dominated by amenity grassland, along with areas of bare ground, hard standing, ephemeral short perennial vegetation and trees, many of which have Tree Preservation Order (TPO) tags attached to the trunks.

1.2 Proposed works

The existing sports hall and gym complex is to be refurbished internally and a new sports hall constructed on the site of the redgra pitch (low maintenance, all-weather material) currently used for car parking. The position of the new sports hall has been determined so that it lies entirely within the redgra pitch and beyond the Root Protection Area of the single avenue of horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* trees to the south.

A new access and fire route is to be constructed around the building, which will be enclosed by a low hedge; this will define the extent of the new development without trying to hide it.

A new woodland copse is proposed to the east of the new sports hall with seasonal bulbs that may be enjoyed by students and staff of the college. Elsewhere, native parkland trees are proposed to create a stronger definition to the open space as well as frame views across it. In time it is intended that a parkland landscape character emerges as the setting for continued intensive sports use required by the college.

A new boundary treatment along Waldegrave Road is proposed to open up views into and across the site so that greater public benefit can be gained from the emerging parkland landscape.

1.3 Aims of study

Baker Shepherd Gillespie has been commissioned to carry out a desktop study to determine the extent of pre-recorded nature conservation interest, an extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the site and a bat roost assessment to establish the potential of the R Block buildings and mature trees within the site to support roosting bats. The aim of this report is to describe the habitat characteristics of the site, present the results of the survey, highlight any areas of conservation concern and to identify any evidence of, or potential for, protected species and their habitats. This report also discusses the need for further specific surveys and puts forward measures which can be taken to minimise adverse ecological impacts and maximise opportunities for biodiversity enhancements as part of the proposed development.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk study

A desk study was undertaken for a one kilometre radius from the approximate centre of the surveyed land in order to locate existing ecological data for the site and for the area immediately surrounding it. The Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) centre, which holds records for open space and biodiversity within Greater London was contacted and records were requested for any non-statutory and statutory designated nature conservation sites. Records of species given legal protection and other notable species were also requested.

2.2 Field survey

An extended Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken by Marcus Fry MIEEM on 15th February 2007 following published guidelines (JNCC, 2003). The habitat types were mapped and target notes were prepared on features of particular ecological interest, including any evidence of, or potential for, protected species and their habitats. These target notes can be found in Appendix 1 and photographs of selected areas of the site in Appendix 2. The presence of other species encountered during the survey was also recorded. On the day of the survey the weather conditions were cold and overcast with light wind. The temperature at midday was 10°C.

2.3 Bat roost assessment

The bat roost assessment was also undertaken on the 15th February 2007, by Dr Edward Bodsworth MIEEM, who is the holder of a bat survey licence from Natural England (Licence No. 20062235).

An internal and external survey of the R Block buildings was undertaken; during the survey of the buildings a powerful torch (Clulite 1 million candle power) and close-focussing binoculars were used to inspect the exterior of the buildings and the roofs from ground level. An internal inspection of the buildings was also undertaken, with particular attention being paid to the construction of the roofs and accessing any roof voids. During the survey, searches were made for evidence of the presence of bats including bat droppings, characteristic staining, scratch marks, live and dead bats and potential bat access points into the buildings.

The large standard trees close to R block were also assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Features such as splits, cracks and holes were viewed, where possible, in order to assess their suitability for roosting bats. The criteria for assessing bat roost potential are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Criteria used for categorisation of bat roost potential

Bat Roost Potential	Criteria.
High	Upward developing holes, splits and cracks and woodpecker holes - with or without ivy
Medium	Downward developing holes, splits or cracks with or without ivy
Low	Dense Ivy covering only

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk study

The GIGL open space and biodiversity records centre provided data on the existence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation importance as well as records of legally protected and notable species, which are presented below.

3.1.1 Designated sites

There are no statutory designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the search area. There is, however one Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – Ham Lands LNR, located at OS grid reference TQ 165 720 and there are also five non-statutory designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within the search area.

Ham Lands LNR is approximately 80 hectares in size and is an area of infilled gravel pits, some old water meadows and a narrow belt of woodland. The area has developed into a mosaic of different ecological zones. The LNR is approximately 300 metres to the east of the site, on the east bank of the River Thames. The map in Appendix 3 illustrates the search radius along with the spatial location of this LNR. The citation for the LNR can be found in Appendix 4.

The SINCs are identified by the Greater London Authority on account of their fauna and flora. Table 2 lists the sites along with a brief description of their habitats. The map in Appendix 5 illustrates the search radius along with the spatial location of these SINCs. The citations for the SINCs can be found in Appendix 6.

Table 2: Designated sites within the search area

Site name	Grid reference	Habitat description	Distance from site boundary (metres)
River Thames and tidal tributaries SINC	TQ 302 806	Intertidal, marsh / swamp, pond / lake, reed bed, running water, saltmarsh, secondary woodland, vegetated wall, wet ditches, wet grassland, wet woodland / carr	250
Ham Lands LNR / SINC	TQ 165 722	Pond /lake, scrub, secondary woodland, semi-improved neutral grassland, wet grassland	350
Strawberry Hill Golf Course SINC	TQ 152 720	Acid grassland, heathland, running water, scattered trees, scrub, secondary woodland	170
Churchyard of St Mary with St Alban, Teddington SINC	TQ 165 713	No description provided	900
Teddington Cemetery SINC	TQ 153 718	No description provided	250

3.1.2 Protected and notable species

The following protected and notable species records for the search area were obtained from the GIGL open space and biodiversity records centre (Table 3). These are species protected under UK or EU legislation. Also included are species of principle importance for biodiversity referred to by Section 41 (England) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (previously a requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 Section 74 species) These species are also recognised by the UK Biodiversity Actions Plan (BAP) and / or the London BAP as species being notable due to their local or national scarcity. Full records as supplied by GIGL are listed under Appendix 7.

Table 3: Protected or notable species records from within the search area

Species	Protected status	Distance from centre of site	Date of Records	Number of records
Cornflower Centaurea cyanus	NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP	260	1976	1
Black poplar Populus nigra betulifolia	NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP	650	1995 – 2002	2
Autumn squill Scilla autumnalis	NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP	260	1973 – 1981	2
Mistletoe Viscum album	NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP	290 – 826	2001 – 2002	4
Stag beetle Lucanus cervus	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5 Sec 9.5a,b, NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP, London BAP	210 – 990	1998 - 2002	91
Slow-worm Anguis fragilis	W&CA Sch 5 Sec 9.1, 5a,b, NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP	770	1998	1
Grey heron Ardea cinera	London BAP	770 – 800	1999 – 2001	2
Goldeneye Bucephala clangula	W&CA Sch 1 Part 2	770	1997	1
Hobby Falco subbuteo	W&CA Sch 1 Part 1	770	1996 – 2001	2
Common tern Sterna Hirundo	Birds Dir Anx 1	770	1998 – 2004	8
Kingfisher Alcedo atthis	W&CA Sch 1 Part 1, Birds Dir Anx 1	770	1996 – 2005	7
Lesser spotted woodpecker Dendrocopos minor	London BAP	770	1997	1
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	W&CA Sch 1 Part 1	770	1999 – 2004	2
Song thrush Turdus philomelos	UK BAP, London BAP	210 – 930	1998 – 2005	56
Redwing Turdus iliacus	W&CA Sch 1 Part 12	770	1998	1
Starling Sturnus vulgaris	London BAP	550 – 830	1999	2

House sparrow Passer domesticus	London BAP	210 – 990	1999 – 2003	82
Bullfinch Pyrrhula pyrrhula	NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP, London BAP	770	1997 – 2004	7
Reed bunting Emberiza schoeniclus	NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP, London BAP	770	1997 – 1999	3
Bat (unspecified)	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	210 – 990	1992 – 2002	48
Daubenton's bat Myotis daubentoni	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	770	2001	1
Noctule bat Nyctalus noctula	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	605 – 790	1994 – 2001	5
Pipistrelle bat Pipistrellus sp.	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	930	1994 – 2001	7
Soprano pipistrelle Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	650 – 920	1997	2
Common pipistrelle Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	570 – 770	2005	1
Brown long-eared bat Plecotus auritus	Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np, W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, London BAP	770	2001	1
Badger Meles meles	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	660 – 850	1999 – 2004	16
Dormouse Muscardinus avellanarius	W&CA Sch 5, Sec 9, Habitat Regulations 1994 Sch 2, NERC Act 2006 Sec 41, UK BAP, London BAP	770	2004	2

Acronyms used in Table 3 are as follows: NERC Act 2006 Sec 41 = the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, (species listed under the requirements of) Section 41

(England). UK BAP = United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan. Hab&spp Dir Anx 2np = Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (European Community Habitats Directive). W&CA 1981 Sch, Sec = Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedules and Sections. London BAP = London Biodiversity Action Plan. Birds Dir Anx 1 = Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds (The Birds Directive). Habitat Regulations 1994 = the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (England and Wales) Regulations 1994 (the Habitat Regulations).

Suitable habitat to support many of these species does not exist within the site. However there is potentially suitable habitat for stag beetle, some of the birds and all of the bat species.

3.2 Field survey

3.2.1 General landscape description

St Mary's college is located to the south of Twickenham, where the surrounding land use is predominantly residential. The site has an athletics track and college buildings to the north, Waldegrave Road to the west, with more college buildings and residential dwellings to the south and east. The site is dominated by mown amenity grassland and also has areas of bare ground, hard standing and trees, with some ephemeral short perennial vegetation on some recently disturbed ground to the east. R Block is located near the southern boundary of the site. The River Thames is within 250 metres of the site's eastern boundary. An aerial photograph is provided in Appendix 8, which illustrates the site and surrounding area.

3.2.2 Habitat description

Grassland

Mown amenity grassland dominated by perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* is the most commonly found habitat throughout the site (Photograph 1, Appendix 2). The grassland habitat comprises two sports pitches, verges and marginal areas around trees. On the sports pitch to the west of the site the grass has been worn away, revealing the bare ground beneath. Where the grassland is not so closely mown cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, red dead nettle *Lamium purpureum*, daisy *Bellis perrennis*, common chickweed *Stellaria media*, stichwort *Stellaria* sp., plantain *Plantago* sp. annual mercury *Mercurialis annua*, spring crocus *Crocus vernus* and daffodil *Narcissus* sp. are present.

Trees and hedgerows

Mature species of horse chestnut and common lime *Tilia x vulgaris* are found around the south of the site (Photograph 2, Appendix 2), along with the occasional oak *Quercus robur*, false acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia*, tree of heaven *Ailanthus altissima*, Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, Leyland cypress *X Cupressocyparis leylandii* and younger specimens of poplar *Populus* sp., maple *Acer* sp., silver birch *Betula pendula*, beech *Fagus sylvatica*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, London plane *Platanus x hispanica* and yew *Taxus baccata*. A line of Leyland cypress forms a hedge along the boundary in the south-east, with elder *Sambucus nigra* and young ash *Fraxinus excelsior* also being present. The ground flora beneath the hedge is predominantly composed of cow parsley, bramble, ivy and species of grass. Many of the mature specimen trees had Tree Preservation Order (TPO) tags attached to their trunks, issued by the Local Planning Authority. The issuing of a TPO makes it an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy any protected tree(s) without first having obtained permission from the Local Authority.

Ephemeral short perennial / ruderal vegetation

To the east of the site, adjacent to a sports pitch, is an area of disturbed bare ground which has some ephemeral short perennial and occasional tall ruderal species of mosses, creeping thistle, willowherb *Epilobium* sp., sow thistle *Sonchus* sp. common nettle and oxtongue *Picris* sp. There are also many dead stems from last year's ruderal vegetation. This area has a low inherent biodiversity value and is fenced off from the rest of the site (Photograph 3, Appendix 2).

Scrub

Small areas of scattered scrub are located around the site in low abundance, with a larger patch in the south-western corner of the site. The scrub is mainly composed of stands of bramble *Rubus fruticosus* with *ivy Hedera helix* and nettle *Urtica dioica*.

Hard standing

Hard standing in the form of roads, footpaths and the redgra pitch is found throughout the site. These areas have extremely low inherent biodiversity value.

Other

To the rear of R Block (south), adjacent to several large false acacia trees, is an area of rockery and plants.

3.2.3 Protected species

Breeding birds

Bird's nests were seen in several locations during the survey and there is suitable habitat throughout the surveyed area, which could support nesting birds. Trees and hedgerow are potentially suitable for use by a wide variety of birds.

Rate

In total nine buildings or structures were surveyed for evidence of, or potential for bats to be using them as roosts. There was no evidence for bats and little or no potential for roosting bats found in any of the surveyed buildings or structures, since they were in good condition with no obvious cracks, crevices or gaps on the exterior which could offer roosting sites to crevice-dwelling bats. A full list of the buildings surveyed, with descriptions of the buildings and comments about the evidence of / potential for bats is given in Appendix 9.

In total thirteen trees were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Ten of these were mature horse chestnuts located to the west of R Block and of the remaining three, one was a mature false acacia to the south (rear) of R Block (Photograph 4, Appendix 2) and the other two were horse chestnuts to the east of R Block. Table 4 lists the trees, describes their features and their potential for roosting bats. Tree numbers should be cross-referenced to Figure 2.

Table 4: Trees assessed as having some potential to support roosting bats

Tree no.	Description	Potential for roosting bats
1	Mature horse chestnut. 2 small rot holes on main trunk	LOW
2	Mature horse chestnut. 2 rot holes on main trunk and flaking bark on upper bough	MED
3	Mature horse chestnut. Rot hole in trunk, light ivy on lower trunk	LOW
4	Mature horse chestnut. Rot hole in trunk	LOW
5	Mature horse chestnut. 2 rot holes on main trunk	MED

6	Mature horse chestnut. Small rot hole on main trunk	LOW
7	Mature horse chestnut. Rot hole in main trunk. Large gash from broken bough and flaking bark	MED
8	Mature horse chestnut. Deep rot hole in one of the main boughs, small rot hole in other bough	MED
9	Mature horse chestnut. 1 limb broken with upward facing scar	LOW
10	Mature horse chestnut. Rot hole at 6m height with dark staining underneath	MED/HIGH
11	Mature false acacia. Twisted and folded bark with several obvious crevices. Two obvious rot holes into main trunk.	HIGH
12	Mature horse chestnut. Small rot hole on main bough	LOW
13	Mature horse chestnut. Several small rot holes and deep scars on limbs.	LOW

3.2.4 Other habitats/species

Incidental records of species were made during the habitat survey and are listed in Table 5 below. A fox earth was also recorded along the western boundary of the site.

Table 5: Incidental species records

Birds		Mammals	
Crow	Great tit	Fox	Grey squirrel
Corvus corone	Parus major	Vulpes vulpes	Sciurus carolinensis
Wood pigeon	Rook		
Columba palumbas	Corvus frugilegus		
Robin	Blackbird		
Erithacus rubecula	Turdus merula		
Blue tit	Starling		
Parus caeruleus	Sturnus vulgaris		
House sparrow	Black-headed gull	1	
Passer domesticus	Larus ridibundus		