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11152: FORMER MARY FEILDING GUILD CARE HOME

ECOLOGICAL UPDATE

Introduction

1. Ecology Solutions was instructed by ND Planning on behalf of Highgate Care Ltd in December 2022 to undertake a peer review of existing ecological work conducted at Former Mary Fielding Guild Care Home, Highgate, and to conduct a subsequent site visit to update/confirm these results.

Summary of existing work

2. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) Report was produced by Tyler Grange Group Ltd in 2021, results from which are reviewed in this briefing note.
3. Surveys, along with the dates on which they were undertaken, are provided in the table below:

Survey	Date
Phase 1 habitat survey, Preliminary Roost Assessment, Habitat Suitability Index Assessment	08/03/2021
Bat emergence surveys	23/08/21, 15/09/21, 29/09/21
Aerial roost inspection surveys	25-26/08/21, 16/09/21, 29/09/21

Phase 1 survey

4. The Extended Phase 1 survey comprised a Phase 1 habitat survey, Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and Habitat Suitability Index Assessment (HSI).
5. The Phase 1 habitat survey found that the site primarily comprises built form with a number of buildings and associated hardstanding. These are surrounded by amenity grassland, introduced shrub, scattered trees and one pocket of dense scrub. A small ornamental pond was also recorded in the south of the site. In addition, the site is surrounded by extensive urban residential development.

Bat survey

6. The PRA identified a number of features on site that provided suitability for roosting bats. Several trees bearing potential roost features were identified, while the main building (B1) was also assessed as having potential to support roosting bats. Trees were subsequently surveyed by aerial inspection depending on their suitability, and no evidence of bats roosting within any of the features was observed. Due to B1's suitability to support roosting bats a suite of emergence surveys was undertaken. A likely emergence of a single Soprano Pipistrelle was observed on the 15th and 29th of September.

Great Crested Newt (HSI) survey

7. A HSI survey was completed on the pond to assess its suitability for Great Crested Newts. It was determined to be of 'poor' suitability.

Summary of update work

8. Ecology Solutions undertook a site walkover on 15th December 2022 to update/confirm the results of the existing ecological work.
9. Habitats within the site were recorded, and an assessment of the site for any potential to support notable or protected species was undertaken. An internal/external assessment of the building for its potential to support bats was conducted, as was an assessment of all trees on and around the site for newly developed features with the potential to support roosting bats.

Habitats

10. The majority of the site comprises built form, with a number of buildings and areas of hard standing. The main building (B1) dominates the site and is surrounded by amenity vegetation including managed grassland, shrub and scrub.
11. Groups of trees were recorded along the western and northern boundaries, as well as scattered trees growing across the vegetated areas of the site. The introduced shrub comprised non-native ornamental species. These habitats were all confirmed to exist in the locations illustrated by previous mapping.

Bats

12. The buildings on site were subject to updated roost assessments, with particular attention paid to internal and external areas of the main building (B1).
13. A number of potential roost features were recorded during the external inspection as identified in the previous EIA including BF3, BF6, BF8, BF9, BF10, BF11, BF14 and BF16, while no new potential roost features were recorded. Not all potential roost features previously recorded could be observed due to the presence of snow on the roof, this is further discussed in the limitations section.
14. No evidence of bats roosting within the building was identified, and no new roost features on trees or the outside of the building were observed.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

15. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment was conducted as part of the initial ecology assessment. Since this work was undertaken a newer version of DEFRA's BNG metric has been released.
16. The area and condition data summarised in the previous report were input into the new metric (3.1) and depending on the treatment of certain parameters a net gain equal to or greater than that proposed by the original report can be achieved.

Limitations

17. The site visit was conducted outside of the optimal botanical survey season, and it is considered that while all the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work, sufficient evidence is available to confirm the findings of the previous survey work.
18. Snow coverage obscured areas of vegetation, however the extent of different habitats could still be ascertained.
19. Similarly, snow covered areas of the roof meaning that not all potential roost features identified in the initial assessment could be directly observed.
20. Both the buildings and vegetation were observed to be subject to regular maintenance and upkeep, actions which would halt the typical diversification of habitats and development of features suitable to support protected species. Therefore, despite the limitations it is not considered that ecological constraints will have changed since the previous survey work was undertaken.

Conclusion

21. It is considered that the initial surveys undertaken by Tyler Grange with respect to Mary Fielding Guild Care Home were suitably detailed to establishing a robust ecological baseline for the site.
22. Following an updated survey in 2022, the results of the initial survey work were confirmed, and no additional ecological constraints were identified.
23. In summary, therefore, the results of the initial survey work are supported and considered to still be accurate and reliable.