Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at:

Shepherd's Close
Highgate
London N5

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Executive Summary

Context:

- The proposed development site is a vacant lot set within an existing suburban residential development.
- The proposal is to construct a single dwelling.
- The site lies adjacent to the Parkland Walk Local Nature Reserve which contains areas of lowland deciduous woodland which is a priority habitat.
- The vegetation on site is limited to a scattering of common ruderal species.
- There are no bat roosts on site, and no likelihood of any bat roosts (if present) in neighbouring trees being damaged or disturbed.
- There is a small amount of habitat suitable for slow worms.
- There is no habitat on site suitable for breeding birds.
- No other protected species are likely to be present.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- No further ecological surveys are required.
- The ecological value of the site is insignificant.
- The development of the site would not harm any protected species, provided removal of small log piles etc is undertaken prior to site clearance to avoid potential to harm to slow worms (or common amphibians) if present.
- The proposed green roof and garden planting would result in a small overall ecological enhancement.

1 Context

1.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) is a review of the ecological features present, or potentially present, within a site and its surrounding area. Its purpose is to:

- Identify any likely ecological constraints associated with a project[1].
- Identify if any additional surveys may be required.
- Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required.
- Identify the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.

1.2 A PEA should only be submitted with a planning application if it confirms that no additional ecological surveys are required.

1.3 This report has been prepared by Peter Massini, a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

2 The Site

2.1 The site is a plot of land on Shepherd's Close in Highgate. The location is shown in Figure 1.

Fig.1 – Site location

[1] Such as the presence of, or proximity to: legally protected sites (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest); legally protected species (such as bats, badgers, reptiles or great crested newts); non-statutory nature conservation sites identified in the Local Plan; and habitats and species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (i.e. UK Priority habitats and species).

2.2 The proposal is for the construction of a single dwelling. The proposed plan is shown in Figure 2.

Fig.2 – Proposed plan

3 Approach to Appraisal

3.1 An initial desktop study, based on an examination of MAGIC[2] - the Defra website providing geographic information about the natural environment – and the Haringey Local Plan policy maps and supporting documents[3], showed that:

- There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), within 1km of the site.
- There are two non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 500 m of the site. The Parkland Walk lies immediately to the west of the site, and Queen's Wood & Highgate Wood lies c.260m to the north. Both are SINCS of Metropolitan importance. The Parkland Walk is also a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- The Parkland Walk is predominantly lowland deciduous woodland and Queen's Wood & Highgate Wood are blocks of ancient woodland and lowland deciduous woodland. Both are habitats listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (i.e. UK priority habitats[4]).

3.2 Due to the site's small size (i.e. < 0.02ha) and context (i.e. set within existing suburban development) it was considered unnecessary to acquire additional data from

[2] MAGIC (defra.gov.uk)
[3] Local Plan | Haringey Council
[4] UK BAP Priority Habitats | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation

Greenspace Information for Greater London[5]. These data are unlikely to provide additional useful insights into the ecology of the proposed development site.

3.3 A site visit was undertaken on 23rd January 2024 to assess the potential of the site to support protected species and/or other features of nature conservation value. Although this is outside of the optimal survey season (i.e. April – September) it is an appropriate time for a small suburban site. Images in this report were taken during the site visit.

4 Results of Appraisal

Description of site

4.1 The site is a vacant lot off of Shepherds Close. It is bounded to the north by the brick wall of an adjacent block of garages, to the south by the garden fence of a neighbouring property, to the east by the access road to Shepherds Close, and to the west by a wooded embankment which forms part of the Parkland Walk LNR.

4.2 The vegetation on site is limited to a range of common ruderal ('weedy') species including petty spurge *Euphorbia peplus*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, wood avens *Geum urbanum*, willowherb *Epilobium* spp., prickly sow-thistle *Sonchus asper* and dove's foot cranesbill *Geranium molle.* Small amounts of ivy *Hedera helix* occur at the edges of the site.

4.3 Where the site borders The Parkland Walk LNR there is scrub of elder *Sambucus nigra*, laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and ivy, plus a lime *Tilia* spp., and several sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* beyond. However, this vegetation is all beyond the site boundary.

4.4 Views of the site are provided in images 1 - 4.

1. View of site looking north to Parkland Walk

[5] Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC - GIGL

2. View of site looking towards Shepherd's Close

3. View of boundary with The Parkland Walk

4. View of site along eastern boundary

Fauna recorded

4.5 No notable species of bird or invertebrate were recorded during the site visit. This is, in part, due to the time of year, but also because the site is very limited both in terms of size and habitat.

Protected species

4.6 No protected species were observed during the site visit.

4.7 The were no trees or structures on site that could provide potential roost sites for **bats**. However, the trees in the woodland to the west were assessed for their potential to provide bat roosts.

4.8 There is a very small amount of habitat on site that is suitable for **reptiles** such as slow worm *Anguis fragilis***.**

4.9 There is no vegetation on site that would provide nest sites for **breeding birds**.

4.10 There is no habitat on site suitable for **great crested newts** *Trituras cristatus*, nor are there suitable breeding ponds in the vicinity of the site. Consequently, great crested newts are not considered further in this report.

4.11 There were no signs of **badgers** *Meles meles* using the site and badgers are unlikely to be present in the immediate locality. Consequently, badgers are not considered further in this report.

4.12 No other protected species are likely to be present.

5 Assessment

5.1 The evaluation of the ecological value of the site is based on professional judgement and *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* [6] published by CIEEM.

Assessment of potential impact on protected sites

5.2 The Parkland Walk SINC lies immediately to the west of the site. However, the development proposal would have no direct impact on the site. There is the potential for minor indirect impacts, such as additional light spill, but this would be a negligible increase bearing in mind the context of the site.

Assessment of potential impact on priority habitats

5.3 For the same reasons as set out in paragraph 5.2 there would be no adverse impact on any areas of priority habitat.

Assessment of potential impact on other habitats

5.4 The proposal would result in the loss of small areas of very common ruderal species of plant. These have limited ecological value. Therefore, their loss would have negligible adverse ecological impact.

Assessment of potential impact on protected species

5.5 Protected species are a material consideration in the planning process. Planning applications need to show whether protected species are present in the area and how they use the site. If protected species are present, it is necessary to demonstrate how development proposals would avoid, reduce or manage any negative impacts.

Bats

5.6 Bats are protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations, 2017. It is an offence to deliberately kill or injure bats, or intentionally disturb, damage or destroy a bat roost.

5.7 The only potential roosting sites for bats are the large clumps of ivy in the sycamore trees within The Parkland Walk to the west. However, there would be no direct impact on these trees and the only potential indirect impact is a very small amount of light spill. However, any light spill from the proposed new development would result in a negligible increase to the spill from existing properties. Furthermore, bat species likely to be present in this location are also likely to be tolerant of existing lighting. Consequently, there is no likelihood of any bat roost being destroyed, damaged or disturbed by the proposal.

Reptiles

5.8 Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. It is an offence to intentionally kill or injure common species of reptile.

5.9 Slow worms are likely to be present along parts of The Parkland Walk and there is an area of allotments that lies c.35m to the north-west which provides suitable habitat for slow worms.

5.10 However, the proposed development site provides only a very limited amount of potential habitat for slow worms in the form of small log piles and material stored in

[6] *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. CIEEM. (2018)*

large builder's bags. These features provide potential refugia for slow worms. However, any potential harm to slow worms (if present) can be avoided by implementation of standard precautions. See Section 6 for further details.

6 Conclusions

5.1 No additional ecological surveys are required.

5.2 The site does not have any significant ecological value.

5.3 There is no risk of harm to protected species provided, prior to site clearance and construction works, existing small log piles and builder's bags are carefully lifted and removed. If slow worms (or more likely, smooth newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* or common toads *Bufo bufo*) are found, they should be carefully lifted and placed into the vegetation along the boundary with The Parkland Walk.

7 Recommendations for ecological enhancement

7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should protect and enhance the natural environment by "*minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity".*

7.2 Furthermore, Haringey Local Plan policy SP13 states, amongst other things, that development should provide *"Contribution to wildlife and ecological habitats and, where possible, include green and brown roofs, rainwater harvesting, green walls, bird and bat nesting/roosting opportunities".*

7.3 The proposed development includes a small area of green roof and an area of garden planting. Bearing in mind this is a very small site this planting would meet the NPPF and Local Plan policy requirements with respect to a net gain for biodiversity.

Note: The policy framework set out in paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2 will be strengthened further when Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) becomes a mandatory requirement for all major development from 12th February 2024, and all small sites from 2nd April 2024, as a result of provisions in the Environment Act 2021[7]. BNG is an approach to development that makes sure that habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before development[8]. When BNG becomes mandatory measurable net gains for biodiversity will be required which will be determined by using the Biodiversity Metric[9].

[7] Environment Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)

[8] Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[9] Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)