



Barhale

Eade Road

Otter and Water Vole Walkover and Ground Level Tree
Assessment for Bats Report

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RSK GENERAL NOTES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an otter (*Lutra lutra*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) walkover survey and a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) for bats at land off Eade Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 1DH. This work was commissioned by Barhale to understand any ecological constraints associated with the sheet piling and a short section of concrete re-lining of 800m of river.

The site has some potential for otter commuting and feeding within the river, therefore it is recommended that access for otter through the watercourse should be maintained throughout the works.

The canal piling along the banks mean there is no potential for otter holts, however three small gaps provide potential access for water voles. These gaps should be resurveyed by a suitably qualified ecologist six weeks prior to works starting, and again two days prior to works starting. This is to ensure that no new water vole field signs are present, or any new activity within the three potential points where they could access the bank.

All of the trees surveyed provided low potential for roosting bats. If any of these trees are to be directly affected by the works they should be checked by a suitably experienced and level 2 bat licenced ecologist using an endoscope prior to works starting.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of an otter (*Lutra lutra*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) walkover survey and a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) for bats at land off Eade Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 1DH (OS Grid Reference: TQ 32190 87857). The survey area included the land within the red-line boundary (the site, see Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The report identifies ecological constraints relevant to proposed sheet piling and concrete re-lining of 800m of river, specifies any further survey or mitigation requirements, and gives recommendations for avoidance and protection through design changes, where necessary.
- 1.1.3 The surveys were carried out on behalf of Barhale.

1.2 Ecological context

- 1.2.1 The site is approximately 2.93 ha and comprises a section of New River, which runs west to east through the site. North of the river, the site comprises mostly modified grassland with dense scrub and scattered trees, two buildings, grids, pipes and two brick borehole covers, as well as several areas of fencing and gating separating the site from residential areas to the north, including Eade Road.
- 1.2.2 South of the river the site contains the New River Path, which follows the river throughout the site. Dense scrub is present along the southern site boundary with several scattered trees and a varying fence/wall boundary separating the site from residential areas and the schools to the south. The east and west of the site lead onto Seven Sisters Road and Green Lanes Road, respectively.

1.3 Development proposals

- 1.3.1 The proposed development seeks to repair the northern bank of the New River and to remove silt. Details of the proposed development are summarised below:
- 1.3.2 A welfare, storage, hardstanding and vehicle lay-down area will need to be constructed on the northern bank of the New River to facilitate the proposed works. Following this, a ramp and hardstanding will also need to be installed along approximately 300m of the northern embankment.
- 1.3.3 Interlocked sheet piles will be installed along the northern embankment. The sheet piles will be installed approximately 0.5m into the river from the existing embankment using MOVAX (25t excavator). Then the space between the sheet piles and the original embankment will be backfilled and grassed to match. Two small areas of the river will be drained where sheet piles cannot be installed. These two areas will be dammed, drained, and desilted to facilitate the construction of a concrete 'U' channel. The channel will lock into the new sheet piles to create the sea. This change is to minimise construction impact to the residents as well as reducing ecological impacts.

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 The otter, water vole and GLTA survey was undertaken on 18 September 2023, by Andrew Oliver, a consultant ecologist with RSK Biocensus. The weather conditions during the survey were overcast but mild with no heavy rain or strong winds, allowing for the survey to be completed with no limitations.

2.2 Otter and water vole

- 2.2.1 A combined walkover assessment was carried out to identify any areas of the river banks that provided potentially suitable habitat for otter and water vole.
- 2.2.2 The northern and southern banks of the river were systematically searched for signs of use by otter and water vole by a suitably experienced ecologist, following standard methods as described in Strachan (2011) and Dean et al. (2016) for water voles, and Conroy & Chanin (2000) and Chanin (2003) for otters. An assessment of habitat suitability was carried out for both species.
- 2.2.3 Signs of otter include spraint (i.e. droppings), footprints, slides, paths, evidence of feeding, holts (underground places of shelter used for breeding) and couches (temporary resting places).
- 2.2.4 Signs of water vole include burrows, lawns, feeding platforms, evidence of feeding (including food remains), latrines and footprints.

2.3 Bats

- 2.3.1 A ground level tree assessment (GLTA) of the trees on and adjacent to the site was undertaken from ground level, using binoculars where required to observe the upper sections of each tree. Trees were assessed based on the presence or absence of potential roost features (PRFs) that bats may use for roosting (e.g. holes, cracks and cavities that might be used as bat access-points or roost sites).
- 2.3.2 The tree's potential to support roosting bats was then categorised as defined in Table 1.

Table 1: Categorisation of the suitability of buildings or trees for roosting bats (Collins 2016)

Category (Potential to support roosting bats)	Description
Negligible suitability	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low suitability	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.

Category (Potential to support roosting bats)	Description
Moderate suitability	A structure or 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 for a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only - the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High suitability	A structure or 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.
Confirmed roost	Bats or evidence of bats recorded during the initial inspection surveys or during dusk/dawn surveys. A confirmed record (supplied by records centre/local bat group) would also apply.

- 2.3.3 Trees may also be categorised as having *unknown potential* if the surveyor's view of the tree is obscured. This can be caused by dense Ivy (*Hedera helix*) covering the trunk and major limbs so as to conceal potential roosting features from view.
- 2.3.4 Any PRFs located were checked for evidence of roosting bats, where possible. Evidence of roosting bats may include droppings, urine stains, staining from fur-oils, wear marks, feeding remains, dead bats, odour, squeaking and chattering, and in some cases the absence of cobwebs.

2.4 Constraints and limitations

- 2.4.1 Due to the time of year that the survey was undertaken, the vegetation on the site was at its densest. As such, it is possible that some evidence of otter and water vole presence such as burrows or spraints could have been obscured from the surveyors view by vegetation. However, considering the wider environment of the site this is not considered to be a major constraint.
- 2.4.2 The GLTA was conducted from ground level, thus any PRFs identified at height could not be inspected fully from the ground to determine the size of the cavity or void present.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Otter

- 3.1.1 The canal piling along the northern and southern banks of the river means that there is no potential for otter holts within the site (Plate 1). The river does provide some potential for otter commuting and possibly feeding.



Plate 1: Canal piling along river banks

- 3.1.2 No evidence of otter field signs was recorded during the survey.

3.2 Water Voles

- 3.2.1 The canal piling along the banks of the river also mean that there is no opportunity for water voles to build burrows within the site. There are three areas at the western end of the site where there is a gap within the piling adjacent to a culvert (Plate 2). These were thoroughly checked for signs of use by water voles and none were found.



Plate 2: Gap within canal piling at western end of site.

- 3.2.2 The site is therefore classified as 'suitable but poor' as any potential burrowing opportunities are limited to the three small areas.

3.3 **Bats**

- 3.3.1 A total of eight trees within and adjacent to the site were found to contain features which may provide suitable roosting locations for bats. The majority of these are located away from the proposed works, or had a limb overhanging the river which may need to be pruned to facilitate the works.
- 3.3.2 The results of the GLTA are summarised in Table 2 and displayed in Figure 2.

Table 2: Results of GLTA for roosting bats

Tree Reference	Photo	Description and indicative bat roost potential
T1		A semi-mature tree (unrecorded species, possibly Black Walnut (<i>Juglans nigra</i>)) on the northern site boundary. Found to be in good overall condition with one recorded PRF. Hazard beam / longitudinal split in limb recorded, approximately 2.5m from ground. Feature is open to the elements as facing upwards. Low potential for roosting bats.
T2		A mature Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) tree on the northern site boundary. Ivy preventing full inspection. Found to be in good overall condition with no PRFs present. Low potential for roosting bats.

Tree Reference	Photo	Description and indicative bat roost potential
T3		A mature tree (unrecorded species) on the south western site boundary. Found to be in good overall condition with one recorded PRF. Pruning cut recorded on south west aspect of stem, approximately 1.5m above ground. Low potential for roosting bats.
T4		A semi-mature (unrecorded species) of tree on the southern site boundary. Ivy preventing full inspection. Found to be in good overall condition with one PRF recorded. Small tearout recorded on western aspect of stem, approximately 1.5m from ground level. Low potential for roosting bats.

Tree Reference	Photo	Description and indicative bat roost potential
T5		A pollarded tree (unrecorded species) on the southern site boundary. One PRF recorded, located approximately 3m from ground level. Low potential for roosting bats.
T6		A young Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) on the southern site boundary. Multi stemmed tree. Found to be in good overall condition with one PRF recorded. Rot hole recorded at the base of tree, cobwebs present in feature and ivy growing within. Low potential for roosting bats.

Tree Reference	Photo	Description and indicative bat roost potential
T7		An unrecorded species of tree on the southern site boundary. Found to be in good overall condition with one PRF recorded. Tear out recorded on northern aspect of stem, approximately 6m from ground level. Low potential for roosting bats.
T8		A mature tree (unrecorded species) located outside of the southern site boundary. Potential feature identified in overhanging branch. Do not prune. Low potential for roosting bats.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Otter

- 4.1.1 As there is some potential for commuting and feeding within the river, access for otter through the watercourse should be maintained throughout the works. Night time working and lighting of the river corridor should be avoided.

4.2 Water Vole

- 4.2.1 The gaps within the canal piling at the western end of the site should be resurveyed by a suitably qualified ecologist six weeks prior to works starting, and again two days prior to works starting. This is to ensure that no new water vole field signs are present, or any new activity within the three potential points where they could access the bank.

4.3 Bats

- 4.3.1 All of the trees surveyed provided low potential for roosting bats. If any of these trees are to be directly affected by the works, for example the overhanging branches pruned to allow access to the river, then the identified features should be checked by a suitably experienced and level 2 bat licenced ecologist using an endoscope prior to works starting.

4.4 Other recommendations

- 4.4.1 As the works are taking place within the watercourse, steps should be taken to prevent the spread of any invasive non-native species that may be present within the site. All equipment should be thoroughly checked, cleaned (and disinfected) and dried before being used in different waterbodies.
- 4.4.2 If the scope of the works changes and requires the watercourse to be dammed and dewatered, a fish survey and possible fish rescue will also be required.

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- Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016). *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series)*. Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The Mammal Society, London.
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FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Figure 2: GLTA Survey Results



Legend:

Site Boundary

00	06/11/2023	2486124	TG	RG	DL
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App

Eade Road Finsbury Park

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EXPERTS IN ECOLOGY

TITLE: Figure 1:
Site Location Plan

060120180

Metres

SCALE: 1:5,000 @ A3

N
W
E
S

REV 00

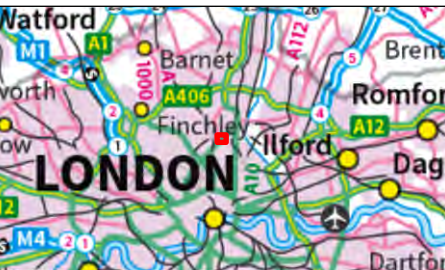


Legend:

Site Boundary

Bat Tree Suitability

● Low



00	20/12/2023	2486124	TG	RG	AL
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App

Eade Road Finsbury Park



TITLE: Figure 2:
GLTA Survey Results

0306090

Metres

SCALE: 1:2,500 @ A3

N

W

E

S

REV 00