PLANNING DESIGN ENVIRONMENT

OCC SITE, SPEKE
GROUND BASED ASSESSMENT OF TREES FOR ROOSTING BATS

TEP Report Ref: 3957.02.001
July 2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

TEP was commissioned in July 2015 by Mace Group, on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside Police, to undertake a ground based assessment of trees at the OCC site in Speke to determine their potential to support roosting bats. This assessment is required to address the comments received from Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) in their pre-application advice letter dated 8th June 2015. Specifically this documents has been prepared to address the comments provided in paragraph 6, Part One and paragraph 9 Part 2 of that letter.

The paragraphs referred to above are detailed below for context.

Part One. Paragraph 6

Protected Species:
The trees on the boundary of the site may provide potential habitat for bats and it would be preferable to maintain this. Bats are protected species and UDP policy OE5 applies. In line with Government guidance, I advise that a bat roost potential assessment of all trees to be affected by development be carried out and the survey report be submitted ***prior to determination*** *of any future planning application. The details required in the survey report are provided in Part Two.*

Part 2. Paragraph 9

A bat roost potential survey includes an assessment of trees, buildings, structures on site for their likelihood to provide bat roosting opportunities and an assessment of the likely value of te hbiatats on site for bat foraging; the bat roost potential survey can be undertaken at any time of year. The following is required with the survey report:

- *Methods used;*
- *Surveyor's name, qualifications and experience;*
- *Results including categorisation of trees according to Hundt 2012;*
- *Recommendations; and*
- *Proposed mitigation/reasonable avoidance measures if bats are found but impacts can be mitigated.*

2. METHODS AND DETAILS OF SURVEYOR

A ground based assessment of all trees within, and directly adjacent, to the site was undertaken on Friday 3rd July 2015 by Linda Swankie CEnv, MCIEEM. Linda has worked as an ecological consultant for over 13 years and has attended several training courses on undertaking bat roost potential assessments. She regularly leads teams of surveyors on bat roosting surveys and has extensive experience in carrying out baseline ecological assessments and full ecological impact assessments. These require determining potential impacts on bats from proposed developments, and designing suitable mitigation to avoid or minimise impacts, where they occur.

The entire site was walked during the survey and close focussing binoculars were used to search all the trees for any evidence of use by bats such as droppings, staining or scratch marks, or for features which could be used by roosting bats. Most tree roosts are created by one or a combination of the following:

- Old woodpecker holes;
- Splits in trunk, bough or large branches;
- Rot holes in trunk, bough or large branches;
- Holes formed by two boughs or branches growing in contact;
- Loose or lifting bark;
- Underneath a covering of dense latticed creeper, usually ivy *Hedera helix*.

The trees were then assigned a 'bat roost potential' category in line with current guidance provided in Bat Conservation Trust: Bat Surveys. Good Practice Guidelines (2012). The criteria for tree roost assessment are details in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Bat Potential Tree Categories (BCT)

Confirmed	A tree where positive signs are found: e.g. emerging bats, droppings found or pre-emergence sounds heard.
Category 1*	Capable of supporting larger roosts and situated in or near good foraging habitat or near a good commuting route leading to such habitat.
Category 1	A tree that has definite features of potential for roosting bats, supporting fewer suitable features than Category 1* trees (above) or with potential for use by single bats but are less than ideal in some way, for example, may have cluttered access.
Category 2	A tree that has no obvious potential, although the tree is of a size and age that elevated surveys may result in cracks or crevices being found; or the tree supports some features that may have limited potential to support bats.
Category 3	A tree that has no potential to support roosting bats.

Limitations

Although it is possible to undertake this type of assessment at any time of year, the optimum time to investigate trees for bat roosting potential is from October to April, when trees are not in leaf and crevices can be more easily seen. As the trees were fully in leaf at the time of the survey this limited visibility in some instances. However, in this case this is considered only a minor limitation as the vast majority of trees on or adjacent to the site are too small or immature to be of value to roosting bats.

3. RESULTS

The vast majority of trees within and directly adjacent to the site are too immature to provide features of value to roosting bats. With reference to the tree survey undertaken on the site by Ascerta in June 2015, and the accompanying Drawing No. P.542.15.01, there are only five individual trees shown within the site boundary. These are all located close to the eastern boundary of the site and are all multi-stemmed willows with dense, bushy growth. There is some minor ivy growth on the main trunk on some of these trees, but this is not of a sufficient age or size to provide roosting opportunities for bats. All the trees within the site boundary are assigned Category 3 in accordance with the criteria in Table 1 above.

The tree survey details the trees in the screening planting along the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the site. As stated, the vast majority of the screening planting is not of sufficient age/size to provide suitable features for roosting bats. Some of the birch *Betula* sp. toward the western end of Group 6 are of a good height, but the main trunks and branches are small in diameter and do not support any potential bat roosting features.

The screening planting along the eastern boundary of the site (G4 on Drawing No. P542.15.01) does contain a number of more mature trees, although again these are multi-stemmed willows, with bushy growth and do not appear to support any suitable features for roosting bats. Some of these trees also support some minor ivy growth on the main trunks but, again, this is not of a sufficient size or age to provide roosting opportunities for bats.

There is one large willow tree within Group 4, which is located just outside the fenceline of the site and virtually in line with the northern-most individual willow tree shown on Drawing No. P542.15.01 (double stemmed white willow 9m with 200m dbh). Due to the dense foliage, it was not possible to confirm whether the tree had a minor split in a small branch or just a minor split in the bark. There were some minor wounds visible in the bark, but these did not appear to provide any potential roosting opportunities. However, due to the restricted view, this one tree is assigned a Category 2 in terms of bat roosting potential, as a precautionary measure only.

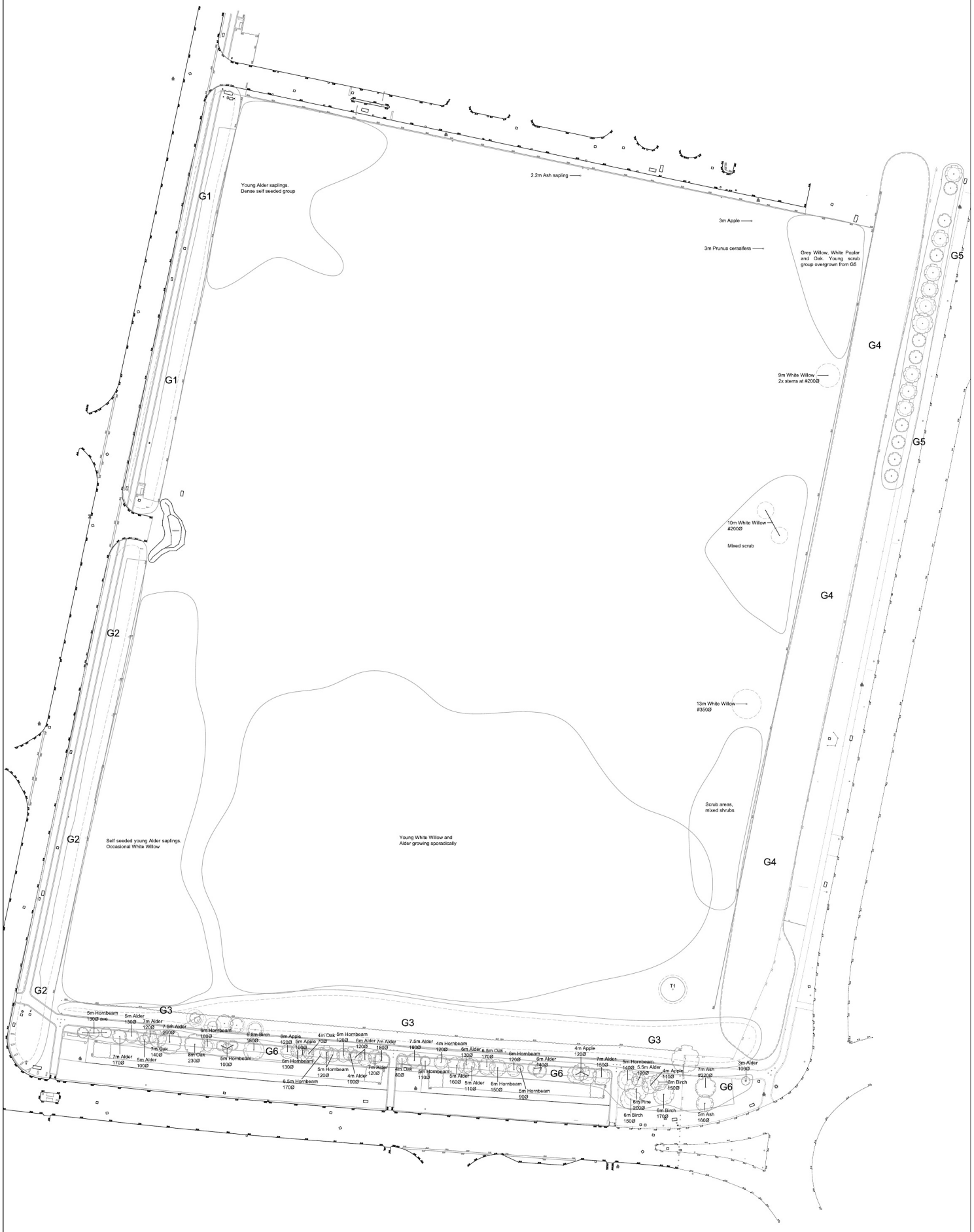
4. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no trees within the site boundary which have any potential to support roosting bats and the vast majority of screening planting along the western, southern and eastern site boundaries is too immature to support any roosting features. Only one tree has been assigned a Category 2 in terms of bat roost potential, and this is as a precautionary measure only due to limited visibility.

There are no requirements for further assessment of any Category 3 trees in terms of roosting bats and it is not considered necessary to carry out any aerial surveys or emergence surveys on the Category 2 willow tree due to the very minor nature of potential roosting features identified. It is assumed that all the screening planting will be retained but, if this tree does require felling or pruning works for any reason, reasonable avoidance measures should be implemented as a precaution.

If required, it is recommended that works to the Category 2 willow tree in Group 4 should be undertaken during the winter period as the tree would not be suitable to support a hibernation bat roost. Carrying out the tree works at this time of year would also avoid any potential for impacts on nesting birds. If for any reason works to the tree could only be carried out during the spring/summer period, it is recommended that the felling is supervised by a licensed bat worker who will advise the most appropriate methods to use to ensure there would be no impacts on roosting bats, in the unlikely event that any were present.

Due to the heavily urbanised nature of the surroundings, the site is considered to be of low value to foraging or commuting bats, although the screening planting could provide some foraging opportunities and links to two small areas of woodland at Stockton's Wood and Speke Hall Wood to the south, which would provide greater foraging opportunities. It is therefore recommended that the screening planting along the boundaries of the site are retained and that the future lighting scheme for the development should avoid direct lighting of these areas.



ALL COORDINATES RELATED TO LOCAL GRID LOCATED TO OS NG BY BEST FIT TO DETAIL, EXTRACTED FROM OS DIGITAL DATA.

Ascerta
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REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE

CLIENT: BDP

PROJECT: Plots 5a, 5b Estuary Business Park, Speke

DRAWING TITLE: Tree Survey

SCALE:	DRAWN BY:	DRAWING No:	REV:
1:500 @A1	CP	P.542.15.01	-
DATE: 03/06/2015	CHKD BY: AM		

KEY

Existing tree to be retained

Extent of Root Protection Area for retained trees in accordance with BS5837: 2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations*

DO NOT SCALE