

Waterman Group

CANADA WATER MASTERPLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL BRIEFING NOTES

TOPIC: The Prince of Orange Walkway - Trees and Ecology

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Introduction

The purpose of this briefing note is to set out the findings of the site visit and additional fieldwork undertaken on 24th September 2015 at The Prince of Orange Walkway area together with visits to the gardens of several neighbouring residential properties. The aim of the visit was to update the survey that was previously undertaken in Spring 2014 and reaffirm the value of the trees and ecology within The Prince of Orange Walkway area. The purpose of the visit was also to meet with local residents and answer questions they had on the survey process and ecological value of the area and listen to their concerns regarding the proposed loss of trees and habitat.

Tree Survey

A tree survey following the principles of BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – recommendations, (BS5837) was previously undertaken in September 2014 during which fieldwork observations and dimensional data were collected and compiled. This included the existing trees and vegetation within The Prince of Orange Walkway area, (tree group T62) although access into this area was, and remains, locally restricted.

It should be noted that topographical information relating to The Prince of Orange Walkway area does not identify individual trees and therefore only modest detail with respect of the locations and species of individual trees has been recorded. This was sufficient for survey purposes and accords with the recognised standards required for the tree survey.

This site visit and fieldwork has allowed the survey data for The Prince of Orange Walkway area to be updated and supplemented to reflect the current baseline conditions and some additional detail.

Baseline Conditions

The Prince of Orange Walkway area contains a mixed age group of trees, where new sapling trees, including self-sown pioneer trees and understorey shrubs have become established within an area of more established trees. The baseline conditions have been recorded in tree group T62 and include Sycamore trees which comprise the most visually dominant tree species present today. The location of the tree group what was recorded is shown on the drawing on the next page.

A relatively wide range of tree and understorey species has become established within The Prince of Orange Walkway area, and many of the trees are now becoming tall and drawn up through competition. The density of trees and subsequent canopy coverage are suppressing potentially valuable understorey vegetation.

The trees and understorey vegetation within the Prince of Orange Walkway area have been graded as a Category 'C' tree group being of low quality and value under BS5837 at this time. This reflects the relative immaturity of the trees and understorey vegetation and lower quality of tree stock, partly as a result of competition and high density.

The value of the existing trees and understorey vegetation to the residents of adjacent properties as a group on the site boundary is acknowledged. Despite issues of current quality as noted above, the area forms an effective spatial and visual buffer between contrasting land uses. The area also forms potential habitat corridor within an otherwise urbanised location. It is understood from conversations on the day of the site visit with the residents of some of the properties adjacent to the site in Hithe Grove and Hothfield Place, that the area is valued by the residents as a spatial and visual buffer as well

as for its ecological and habitat qualities, despite the notable shading of a number of garden spaces as a direct result of these trees.



Drawing showing Tree group T62

Ecological Survey

Background

The Prince of Orange Walkway area was previously surveyed in Spring 2014 by Waterman as part of the wider Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the Masterplan site. The findings from Spring 2014 were:

*'This area comprises shrub planting with scattered broad leaved trees. Shrub species recorded include buddleia *Buddleja davidii*, hybrid bluebell *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*, green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, rose., cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, laurel, ivy *Hedera helix*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* saplings, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, and gorse *Ulex sp.* The dominant tree species recorded include sycamore, with yew, cherry, ash, field maple *Acer campestre* and Norway maple *Acer platanoides*'.*

A tree survey was carried out in October 2014; this assessed the value of the area as:

'These ornamental shrubs and scattered trees on Site offer limited ecological potential to support foraging and nesting birds. Therefore, these habitats are considered to be of value within the boundary of the Site only'.

2015 survey results

The updated extended Phase 1 Survey visit on 24th September 2015 confirmed the 2014 assessment. The area comprises shrub planting and scattered broad-leaved trees, forming, in parts scrubby woodland (in accordance with Extended Phase 1 Habitat terminology).

In the northernmost section, adjacent to the end house on the cul-de-sac (No. 10), it was evident that early-mature trees had recently been removed (since the Spring 2014 survey). This 'cleared area' comprised a thick ground carpet of ivy *Hedera helix* and regenerating sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, with nettle *Urtica dioica*, hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens* and cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*. Shrub species included hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, rose sp *Rosa sp*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, buddleia *Buddleja davidii*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and hebe sp. *Hebe sp*. There was evidence of rubbish dumping /fly tipping in this area.

The main area (middle) was more wooded in character, comprising some planted trees/shrubs, some young trees and some more mature trees. Many of the trees appeared in poor condition with fallen branches. Species included sycamore, field maple *Acer campestre*, elder, hawthorn, Robinia *Robinia pseudoacacia* and cherry *Prunus sp*. Many of the trees, particularly the sycamores had a growth of ivy. Occasional species included firethorn *Pyracantha sp*. The ground cover was thick ivy.

Towards the southern end, there is more scrub (mix of native and ornamental), with a patch of hawthorn plus bramble, cherry, firethorn, holm oak *Quercus ilex*, ivy, sycamore and Norway maple *Acer platanoides*.

The 'southern extension' comprises two mature sycamore plus at least three younger sycamore, with a single yew tree *Taxus baccata*. Ivy is common and there is an ornamental fringe of cotoneaster *Cotoneaster sp*. along Deal Porters Way.

Bird species recorded during the update Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of The Prince of Orange Walkway area included:

- Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* – a single calling, on migration
- Wood pigeon *Columba palumbus* – small numbers, potential breeding species
- Robin *Erithacus rubecula* - small numbers, potential breeding species
- Blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* - small numbers, potential breeding species
- Blackbird *Turdus merula* - small numbers, potential breeding species
- Dunnock *Prunella modularis* - small numbers, potential breeding species
- Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* - small numbers, potential breeding species
- Magpie *Pica pica* - small numbers, potential breeding species

Mammals recorded: grey squirrel and fox earth.

Invertebrates: red admiral butterfly.

Ecological assessment

The 2015 survey confirmed the findings of the 2014 surveys that the area does not comprise any statutory or non-statutory designated wildlife sites and does not contain any habitats of principal importance under S.41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.

No evidence of any protected species was found during the survey.

The habitats present are considered suitable to support small numbers of common urban/garden nesting birds during the breeding season (including those listed as potential breeding species above): all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended¹). The territories of such species are also likely to include parts of adjacent gardens. One species present, the dunnock, is a species of principal importance under S.41 of the NERC Act (2006) and therefore needs to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions with a view to conserving biodiversity. The dunnock has been placed on the Amber List of birds of conservation concern² because its breeding population underwent a substantial decline between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s. Since then the population has recovered somewhat, although numbers have not returned to previous levels. Whilst still a very common garden species across the UK, the dunnock action under S.41 relate to research into its recent decline.

The trees on site were considered too immature to support features of bat roosting potential, although local bats may use the area for foraging.

In conclusion, the site does not support any designated sites, notable habitats or protected species. One species, the dunnock is a principal species of importance under S.41 of the NERC Act (for research purposes) but is widespread in gardens throughout the UK and is likely to breed in adjacent gardens. The site provides local biodiversity amenity to local residents, who benefit from contact from the common place wildlife species which use the site and visit adjacent gardens.

¹ An offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird; intentionally take, damage or destroy its nest; intentionally take or destroy their eggs.

² BTO, RSPB 2009