Proof of Evidence on Ecology Matters

Tooting Triangle – Common Land Application Inquiry

Proposed Works on Tooting Bec Common - COM/3263104

(Planning Application 2019/4206)

Prepared by

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Introduction

1) My name is Valerie Selby. I have 27 years' experience as an ecologist for urban local authorities. I have a degree in Amenity Horticulture from University of Hertfordshire and over 33 years' practical experience in land and water management for biodiversity.

2) My experience began as an assistant volunteer reserve manager for London Wildlife Trust whilst concurrently volunteering for Sutton Nature Conservation Volunteers – in both roles, overseeing practical habitat management on a range of peri-urban sites in LB Sutton. I then worked for Sussex Wildlife Trust as a Conservation Assistant and then was asked to take on the role of Assistant Warden at their flagship Woods Mill nature reserve. As a Conservation Assistant I was the primary liaison for contact with species specialists across East and West Sussex; I wrote management plans for Trust nature reserves; and assisted with work to scrutinise local planning policies and comment on planning applications on behalf of the Trust. In the role of Assistant Warden, I was responsible for reserve management including reedbeds, lakes, neutral grasslands, and ancient woodland; delivering environmental education; managing volunteers and running a visitor centre.

3) In 1995 I was appointed Lambeth Officer for London Wildlife Trust. In this role I provided scrutiny on planning applications and advice to LB Lambeth planners on strategic biodiversity matters. I was also responsible for delivering an environmental education programme in Brixton and for management of Trust reserves within the borough.

4) In 1997 I took up the post of Ecology Officer for Wandsworth Council. I ran the Nature Study Centre environmental education facility on Wandsworth Common alongside developing and delivering biodiversity action across the borough. The scope of the role then grew to include habitat management advice across the Council's land holdings, scrutiny of planning applications and policy advice to Borough Planners. In 2005 I was promoted to Principal Parks Officer (Biodiversity), in part to recognise the wider regional strategic work I was involved in, for example sitting on the London Biodiversity Partnership Board. In 2015 I was also asked to manage the Parks Development team and so my role became Principal Parks Officer (Biodiversity and Parks Development).

5) Since October 2015, when the Council transferred responsibility for the provision of leisure and cultural services in the borough to Enable LC I have been in the post of Biodiversity and Parks Development Manager. In this role I work solely on matters within LB Wandsworth. I am responsible for advising Wandsworth Council on its biodiversity duty under NERC (Natural Environment and Rural Communities) Act 2006 Section 40.

6) My work to advise Wandsworth Council and to deliver biodiversity action on its behalf, includes several concurrent strands. I am responsible for understanding and managing the evidence base of habitat, species, and places data to inform decision making; for advising on land and water management for biodiversity on land owned and managed by the Council; for advising on legislation, policy, and best practice regarding biodiversity (including planning policy); for provision of scrutiny on planning applications and for wider matters of community engagement with biodiversity.

7) In a personal capacity I was the inaugural chair Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (Community Interest Company) the capital's environmental record centre (GiGL) between Jan 2013 and July 2019. As mentioned previously, I represented all London Borough ecologists on the Board of the London Biodiversity Partnership between 2006 and 2012. I am a past chair of the London Borough Biodiversity Forum (2007 – 2012) and a member the London Invasive Species Initiative steering group (2009 - present). I have been a member of Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE) since beginning in my role at Wandsworth.

8) I confirm that the evidence presented below in relation to planning application ref 2019/4206 put forward by Wandsworth Council is a true and accurate representation of my professional opinion.

Tooting Common Biodiversity

9) <u>Designations – background:</u>
Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs), known nationally as Local Wildlife Sites, are locally designated areas which are recognised as being of particular importance to wildlife and biodiversity. Although a non-statutory designation, SINCs are afforded a high level of protection within the planning system. Development that negatively impacts on a SINC may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where mitigation can be proven. Within London, a hierarchy of SINC designations is in place: Sites of Metropolitan Importance are designated by the Mayor of London in partnership with Local Authorities, while the designation of Sites of Borough or Local Importance is the responsibility of the local authorities. The London Wildlife Sites Board (LWSB) provides guidance on selecting and confirming SINCs designed to ensure consistency and that the process is compliant with various policy frameworks.

10) <u>Designations – Tooting Commons:</u>
Tooting Common(s) is a Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMI) for biodiversity as determined by the Mayor for London and the local authority in the Local Plan (M124). SMIs contain the best examples of the habitats that are of particular importance within London. The citation for Tooting Common(s) states: *A large open space with three extensive areas of woodland (Bedford Hill, Streatham Hill and Tooting Graveney Woods) and relict acid grassland, serving a part of south London particularly lacking in good wildlife sites. The woodland is dominated by oak (Quercus sp.), with a range of other trees including hornbeam (Carpinus betulus). The common supports an unusual variety of woodland birds for such an urban site. The common has several fine veteran oaks. An interesting invertebrate fauna includes a good population of stag beetles. The acid grasslands are dominated by*

common bent (Agrostis capillaries) and red fescue (Festuca rubra), with pockets of gorse (Ulex europeaus) and bramble (Rubus fruticosus) scrub. There are also wetland areas and a lake

11) Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy (Core Documents 31 and 32) Priority Habitats - background:

Priority habitats have been selected as they are regional, national, and local habitats found in Wandsworth that are home to rare and declining or characteristic species. Conservation effort is required to maintain and enhance both the spatial area of these habitats and the quality and condition of them, to prevent harm or loss to the species they support. Habitats are more resilient to adverse impacts if they are bigger in size, better in quality, if there are more parcels and if these parcels are joined up.

12) Priority habitats in Wandsworth are: • Acid Grassland • Neutral (wildflower) grassland • Rivers inc Tidal Thames • Lakes, ponds and reedbeds • Woodland and scrub (including. veteran trees and dead wood) Priority nature recovery networks are: • Semi-natural habitats associated with transport corridors • Open mosaic habitat including where such habitat is provided as a biodiverse roof

13) Priority habitats can be afforded protection from development via the Local Plan. However, with priority habitats the greatest threat to them comes from benign neglect or through inappropriate maintenance and management action. Focussed plans for the continued conservation, and enhancement, of existing priority habitats and to direct the establishment of nature recovery networks will prioritise resources and effort to ensure the best benefits for biodiversity. Where possible existing wildlife corridors will be strengthened and gaps in connectivity redressed. Opportunities to contribute to wider urban greening initiatives will be maximised to achieve these aims.

14) Actions in the Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy are: • Priority habitats will be afforded protection from development through appropriate policies in the Wandsworth Local Plan • Focussed plans for the conservation and enhancement of priority habitats will be devised and implemented by relevant partners. • The Council will ensure that where it owns or manages land or water which support priority habitats, management and maintenance actions will prioritise their enhancement for biodiversity quality and condition • Work to create new habitats will be prioritised to focus on the expansion of existing habitat parcels and the creation of new habitats at locations which improve links and connections at the landscape scale. • Work with owners and managers of priority habitats in adjacent boroughs to improve the connectivity and habitat quality • The nature recovery network principles will form the core of urban greening proposals to improve connectivity and increase opportunities for people to have connections with nature.

15) Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy Priority Species - background:

In Wandsworth priority species that are often impacted outside of protected places or habitats include small mammals and some bird species, which can be harmed or displaced through changes to buildings and through alterations to or the introduction of external lighting. They have therefore been specifically identified as priority species which would benefit from a raised profile and a specific focus on measures to conserve and enhance them. This will allow actions to protect the species themselves, the landscapes that they rely on and to guide how built features and surrounding landscapes can be enhanced to better support them.

16) Priority species in Wandsworth are: • Bats (all species) • Hedgehog • Black redstart • House Sparrow • Brown trout • Peregrine falcon • Starling • Swift • Stag beetles • Tawny owl • Pollinators including hoverflies, wild bees, soldierflies and wasps

17) Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy Actions for priority species are: • priority species will be afforded protection from development through appropriate policies in the Wandsworth Local Plan •focussed plans for the conservation and enhancement of priority species will be devised and implemented by relevant partners. • the Council will ensure that where it owns or manages land or water which support priority species, management and maintenance actions will prioritise actions to benefit them • opportunities to create and improve existing habitats for mobile protected species will be secured, in particular working with neighbouring boroughs and cross-border landowners and managers.

18) Priority Habitats and Species - Tooting Commons:
Of particular importance on Tooting Commons as a whole are the Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats of acid grassland, secondary woodland, veteran trees, lakes and reedbeds. Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy Priority species known to occur here include house sparrow, starling, swift, stag beetle, a wide suite of pollinators and bats.

19) Proposed Development footprint - localised habitats and species:
The proposed development is within an area of Tooting Common(s) known as Triangle Field which is bounded by railway lines to the north and west and by residential properties, Woodfield including The Woodfield Pavilion, and Streatham and Clapham High School to the east. Habitats in this area (but not within the application site itself) are amenity grassland, small pockets of acid grassland, wet woodland, and scattered trees. Buildings in this area include the buildings subject to alteration as part of this proposed development as well as The Woodfield Pavilion on the east of the site. There are also areas of hard standing associated with the existing sport and play provision as well as the small, isolated garden parcel associated with the proposed development. Priority species data is not always available at a parcel-by-parcel resolution however it is known that starling, swift and bats forage across this Triangle Field area and it is likely that stag beetles and pollinators may also be present.

20) Consideration of Ecological Matters:
To inform the planning submission a Bat Habitat Assessment Survey was undertaken by Alison Fure (BSc MSc C.Env and MCIEEM) in March 2019. Ms Fure is a holder of a Class 2 Bat Licence (Natural England licence number 2015-10381-CLS-CLS), she is a Chartered Environmentalist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). She acts as a roost visitor on behalf of Natural England; she is experienced in undertaking bat emergence and activity surveys using recordable frequency division equipment and / or “Anabat” static bat detection equipment; she specialises in monitoring the effects of entertainment such as lighting, music, fireworks on bats; and all her surveys and reporting are undertaken in accordance with recognised best practice for example the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct and Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines. Ms Fure is familiar with Tooting Commons having undertaken previous survey work to inform building alteration works at The Woodfield Pavilion and separately to investigate the value of significant avenues elsewhere on the Commons.

21) This Bat Habitat Assessment Survey (Furesfen March 2019) (Core Document 23)~~,~~ comprised of an analysis of existing records ("desk study") along with a site walkover visit to both assess the physical structures to be included within the development, and to assess mature trees in the vicinity. Bat activity survey information was understood from previous survey work across the Commons in 2016 and 2018 and other records held by the London Bat Group and this informed the desk study. Given the information available of bat species recorded in the area, no further survey was considered necessary for the purpose of the assessment.

22) Furthermore, Ms Fure undertook a Lighting Assessment Ecology Report (Furesfen Dec 2019) (Core Document 24) in response to comments made at the planning stage with information that had not been available during March 2019. Changes to the light configuration had been made in response to the pre-planning consultation such as the movement of a lighting column behind the northernmost goal position.

23) <u>Assessing potential impacts (both positive and negative) from developments proposed for SMI:</u> When a planning application is submitted for development on an SMI, Wandsworth Planners seek ecological scrutiny from me or my colleague to ensure that matters in relation to Local Plan Policy DMO4 Nature Conservation are considered. This policy has two aspects against which I assess the submitted information:

24) DMO4a Development which would cause harm to a Special Area of Conservation, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, other site with important bio/geodiversity value, or 112 Local Plan - Development Management Policies Document (Adopted March 2016) showing superseded policies March 2017 any protected species will not be permitted unless any damaging impacts can be prevented by appropriate mitigation measures or use of conditions.
25) DMO4b All development proposals should aim to provide gains for biodiversity. New habitats and biodiversity features should consider native and priority species, taking into account species' adaptability to climate change. Development proposals in areas deficient in access to nature, as defined by GiGL and made available via their website, will be required to incorporate enhancements to nature conservation

26) For the planning application for this scheme (2019/4206) on Tooting Common and regarding DMO4a I assessed the impacts of the proposals on both habitats and species known to occur on this site and which combined form the reason for the designation. I can use habitat and species data from GiGL[1] to provide a baseline against which I can make my assessment, along with my own professional judgement based on over 20 years familiarity with the site and local habitats and species. I use this knowledge, along with the submitted information concerning the detail of the proposed building changes and lighting, the biodiversity information submitted to inform the application, to determine whether harm might be caused by the proposal. If harm may be caused, I also use this knowledge to determine if any damaging impacts can be prevented by appropriate mitigation.

26a) With regard to habitats:

[1] GiGL is Greenspace Information for Greater London, the capital's environmental record centre which is accredited by the Association of Local Environmental Record Centres (ALERC). Please see appendix one below which shows an extract of GiGL data – specifically bat data in the vicinity of Tooting Common

I determined that the proposals would have no direct or indirect impact on priority habitats on Tooting Common. No veteran trees, lakes or reedbeds occur in the vicinity of the scheme. The nearest acid grassland present on the Triangle field is approximately 150 metres from the proposed development (site). This is not close enough proximity to result in any direct or indirect impacts on this habitat from the approved works. Additionally, Condition 4 of the planning approval (ref: 2019/4206) requires the further submission, for approval, of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). This will allow the Council to understand if any proposed details of construction may have any (currently unforeseen) adverse impacts which can then be prevented or mitigated for appropriately to prevent harm to this habitat. The pathway to the immediate north of the proposed development footprint is shrouded by individual, often self-set trees of mixed native species and is overhung by trees and scrub encroaching from the adjoining Network Rail land. None of this vegetation has the extent of form or functionality for biodiversity found within the secondary woodland complexes elsewhere on the wider Common. [Of particular relevance for comparison would be the secondary woodland parcel (Triangle Wood) to the far east of the triangle field where a mix of native tree species is found together with a range of herbaceous plants, bare ground and ditches which combine to form a habitat of recognised value for biodiversity.]

26b) With regard to priority species:

i. House sparrow: The proposals will have no direct or indirect impact on house sparrows. Whilst there is recognised breeding and foraging habitat well used by house sparrows in the scrub habitats to the north of Bedford Field elsewhere on Tooting Bec Common, this will not be impacted in any way by the current proposal, being separated from the area of the proposals by a minimum 300m and a further raised railway line.
ii. Starling: The proposals will have no direct or indirect impact on starlings. Whilst there is recognised foraging habitat well used by starlings to be found in many parcels of amenity and sport pitch turf across the whole of Tooting Commons, this will not be impacted in any way by the current proposal. The current proposals do not involve any changes to existing grass / turf sport pitches, focusing as they do on changes to “Redgra” hard surfaced areas. Starlings nest in holes in trees and buildings; no nesting opportunities will be impacted in any way by the current proposal. The self-set trees to the immediate north of the proposed development are of insufficient size to support hole nesting birds; no signs of nesting activity were identified in any of the ecological surveys that have been undertaken on behalf of the applicant to inform this proposal.
iii. Swift: The proposals will have no direct or indirect impact on swifts. Swifts nest high up in roof spaces under the eaves of buildings and forage and feed on the wing. No signs of nesting activity were identified in any of the ecological surveys that have been undertaken on behalf of the applicant to inform this proposal.
iv. Stag beetle: The proposals will have no direct or indirect impact on stag beetles. Stag beetles spend up to seven years as larvae below ground feeding on rotting untreated wood. When they emerge as adults, they are indiscriminate about the habitats they use and can be found flying across the whole common in late spring/early summer. No dead wood or suitable rotting buried wood to support larvae has been identified during any of the ecological surveys on site undertaken to inform this proposal.
v. Pollinators: The proposals will have a negligible effect on pollinators. This broad group includes wild bees, wasps, hoverflies, butterflies, moths, flies and soldierflies who play a significant role contributing to the functionality of heavily vegetated habitats (grassland and woodlands) in particular. The garden habitat associated with the children’s centre building as well as the self-set trees to the immediate north provide some opportunities for pollinators to overwinter, particularly those that use hollow stems or rolled leaves. Some

pollinators overwinter in ground holes in warm sandy soils, the closest area for this habitat is away from these proposals to the south-west of Triangle Field. These species are highly mobile when foraging and seek to use appropriate flower rich habitats favouring those sheltered from breezes and not subject to heavy shading. The garden associated with the children's centre building, whilst sheltered, is not flower rich and is shaded throughout the day because of existing high fences surrounding a comparatively small footprint. The proposals will not bring about any material losses to pollinator habitats within the wider context of Tooting Commons where suitable overwintering and summer foraging habitats are found across a wide area in a mosaic which provides greater resilience for individual species populations.

vi. Bats: The proposals will bring about a moderate beneficial impact on bats in this part of Tooting Common. Several professional bat studies over the years have identified that bats have been recorded using Tooting Commons. This includes both species known to favour buildings for roosts and species known to utilise natural habitat features for roosts; of relevance to this issue are that these species have been recorded as roosting in the vicinity of Triangle Wood and The Woodfield Pavilion both a minimum of 300m to the east of the proposals. This includes Soprano Pipistrelle, Common Pipistrelle, Leislers, Noctule and Serotine bats. The data also clearly shows bats recorded both commuting and foraging across areas of Tooting Triangle, most notably again over Triangle Wood and over the canopy of the oak tree grove to the south-west of the Triangle field. The tree line alongside (and on the land associated with) the railway is also favoured by bats for commuting as it provides a comparatively dark corridor and affords good connectivity between off site roosts and favoured foraging areas on the common. The buildings associated with the proposals in the Tooting Triangle area (currently a children's centre and a boxing club) have been fully internally and externally inspected to inform our understanding of their value to roosting bats. They were assessed as having no bat roosts within or associated with the buildings; the associated garden habitat was assessed as providing limited foraging opportunity with other areas (as above) favoured and the railway lineside to the immediate north was identified as providing commuting habitat however the proposals will have no impact on this feature. The plans and documents supplied with the proposals to inform the granting of planning permission demonstrate that the proposed changes to lamps and in particular the use of LED lights to replace the existing floodlights will bring about a reduction in light levels and light spill in this part of the Triangle field. When compared, the lux contour plans at 4m height and 8m height (the heights at which artificial lighting can adversely impact bat behaviour) for the existing (currently in situ) metal halide lights and the proposed LED luminaires (to be delivered as part of this proposal), indicated greatly reduced amounts of light spillage to the east and southern areas outside the pitch. The applicant also proposed the addition of further tree planting to "fill gaps" in the existing band of trees immediately abutting the east of the pitch area which will provide a strengthened natural buffer limiting light spill onto the Triangle Field and allowing unaffected ongoing use of areas known to be of value to bats (Triangle Wood, the oak tree grove, and the areas around The Woodfield Pavilion). The delivery of this has been secured by Condition 7 attached to planning permission (ref: 2019/4206). The Lighting Assessment Ecology Report (A Fure 2019) (Core Document 24) concludes that: the proposals slightly reduce the small amount of spillage onto the northern boundary; greatly reduce the unchecked spillage to the east and south; reduces glare across the pitch in every direction traveling through the wider environment; removes the need for the continuous illumination of an empty pitch; reduces reflectivity in the proposed surface; removes the unwanted UV component of the light.

27) Conditions were attached to the granted planning permission (ref:2019/4206) to ensure that the scheme can be built in accordance with the submitted plans and places a further

obligation on the applicant to prevent harm to biodiversity throughout construction and further still, seeks post construction commitments to ensure that the proposals will have been appropriately delivered to prevent harm to and to actively benefit biodiversity with a focus on the needs of bats: Specifically:

i. Condition 4 requires the submission for approval of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to ensure that construction methodologies and on-site staff awareness and training will prevent inadvertent harm to priority species.
ii. Condition 5 requires the submission for approval of a Post Completion Light Spillage Report demonstrating that the "as built" lighting is in accordance with the submitted plans. This is required to be approved before the facility is operational and is intended to ensure that the improvements to lighting as detailed in the submission are built as intended and achieve the minimised impacts required.
iii. Condition 5 also requires that at all times "Any and all sports pitch floodlights, should be turned off by no later than 21.00. Any additional external lighting (except emergency lights) should be on a timer and be turned off no later than 22:00 (to allow staff safe egress from the premises) or on a motion sensor activation. Floodlighting may not be used between 15th May and 15th September each year". These are measures specifically implemented to prevent harm to protected and priority species (in particular bats).
iv. Conditions 6 require tree protection methods to be in place and approved as satisfactory to prevent harm to trees during construction.
v. Condition 7 secures the delivery of the additional tree planting to the east of the pitch area and indeed secures further additional planting in the form of a native species hedge to the north of the buildings to supplement the self-set planting and overhanging vegetation from the railway.

28) **For the planning application for this scheme (2019/4206) on Tooting Common and in regard to DMO4b**, at the time this specific application was submitted (prior to the Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act 2021 proposals for mandatory biodiversity net gain), I sought to ensure that the gains for biodiversity be focussed on protected and priority species known to occur on the Common as a whole and which might be able to expand their range and thereby to increase the resilience of the population.

29) Condition 5 and 7 of 2019/4206 specifically secure appropriate biodiversity gain – in the form of greater control over operational hours and reduced spill from external lighting and through the provision of additional planting to improve local habitat connectivity. These measures will all provide gain for bats.

30) **My overall assessment of the planning application 2019/4206 was:** Whilst bats have been found to be foraging and commuting in proximity to the proposals, the measures applied by means of conditions attached to planning permission prevent harm to bats during construction, and the completed scheme will bring about permanent improvements to benefit bats and support their continued presence in this area.

<u>With regard to specific points raised by objectors which concern ecological impacts:</u>

31) ***…. the view expressed by the Local Correspondent for the Open Spaces Society (OSS)*** that the Council's position is *"completely incoherent" given* that it has *"strongly opposed the installation of floodlight's on the Streatham and Clapham High School (SCHS) hockey pitch <u>adjacent to</u> the common because of the impact this would have on the common but now proposes to have floodlights <u>on the common itself</u> ….."*

32) In response to this view there is unambiguous evidence that bats have been recorded as roosting in the vicinity of Triangle Wood and The Woodfield Pavilion both a minimum of 300m to the east of the application site. The data also clearly shows bats recorded both commuting and foraging across areas of Tooting Triangle, most notably again over Triangle Wood and over the canopy of the oak tree grove to the south-west of the Triangle field.
33) The Triangle Wood, some 300 metres distant from the application site, runs adjacent to the SCHS whilst the Woodfield Pavilion, also some 300 metres distant from the application site, is within 100m of the SCHS and this area is currently not subject to any floodlighting. Therefore, in response to the known and understood use of this immediate area for bats for roosting, commuting, and foraging, the impacts of any proposed new floodlighting at SCHS would have a significant adverse impact unless sufficient suitable mitigation were proposed. Condition 6 of LB Lambeth planning application ref 18/04221/VOC (Core Document 25) states that "There shall be no artificial illumination of the pitch at any time" with the associated committee report (Core Document 26 – Item 4.1) stating: "Biodiversity Officer – Originally objected to the proposals due to the potential use of artificial illumination, which could impact unacceptably on the local ecology. However, this objection was withdrawn following the proposal to include a condition to confirm that no artificial illumination of the pitch would be allowed" and "LB Wandsworth – No comments received to date, however Wandsworth's Biodiversity Officer has stated that the proposed hours of use could require floodlighting, which would have a damaging effect on ecological receptors. Officer Comment: A condition is proposed to be attached to the consent to prevent artificial illumination of the pitch, and this would also prevent temporary floodlighting. Natural daylighting conditions would determine whether the pitch could be used for the full extent of the hours proposed"
34) This is contrary to the situation that applies to the application site under current consideration where the use by bats is limited to local foraging over the small garden and commuting along the adjacent railway line concurrently with the existing floodlighting provision and where modifications to future lighting and additional planting have both been agreed to provide further mitigation.

35) Loss of trees:

36) The proposal includes the removal of 4 (T3, T4, T5, T6) trees categorised as "low quality" in the Arboricultural Method Statement (Core Document 27) accompanying the application was scrutinised by Enable Arboricultural Officers and accepted by the LPA. None of the trees is of adequate shape or growth habit to support nesting birds nor do they contribute to the biodiversity of the wider Commons in any significant way. The current proposal as stated in the submitted Design and Access statement, has committed to planting a group of native trees, in accordance with the Council's policy of planting only native tree species on Common land and whilst the numbers are not yet defined, we expect this to amount to a minimum number of 20 new trees (minimum size 12-24) to complete and extend the copse to the immediate east of the proposals. The full and final details of this aspect are to be determined during the process to discharge Condition 7 of planning permission 2019/4206. Native tree species suggested as suitable for planting in this area include Oak, Hornbeam, Lime, and Thorn. Extending the copse aids delivery of the Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy through making an existing small woodland habitat parcel bigger. The trees will not be constrained by any buildings and will be able to grow in a form and shape appropriate to support nesting birds whilst the grouping will allow use by a range of other species supported by small copses across the wider Common.
37) Overall, there will be a measurable net gain in tree provision at this location if the plans proceed.

38) Impact on Foraging Species:

39) Whilst the objector did not define what they intended to mean by "foraging species" I have taken it to refer to species which may use the habitats in the locality primarily for finding food (as opposed to using the area for roosting / nesting). Foraging species known to occur on Tooting Commons include bats, birds including starling, swift and house sparrow, and pollinators. There is no evidence that any foraging species will be adversely affected by this proposal. The use of this location by bats to forage is discussed elsewhere. The use of this location by birds and pollinators is also discussed elsewhere. In summary foraging by priority species in this area occurs over turf / grassland habitats which are not included within the scope of the application site. The Bat Habitat Assessment report by Furesfen March 2019 makes clear refence to foraging birds in the immediate surrounds. Therefore Condition 4 of planning approval (ref: 2019/4206) requires the further submission for approval of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). This will allow the Council to understand if any proposed details of construction may have any (currently unforeseen) adverse impacts on foraging birds during construction.

40) Loss of ivy:

41) As has been previously explained the loss of the trees and the ivy in this specific location on the Common are not of significance when considered at the site wide level; we do not deny that ivy has a role to play in supporting invertebrates across the whole of Tooting Commons but there are significant areas of ivy cover of greater significance elsewhere. Ivy is not a protected species nor is it priority species in the Wandsworth Biodiversity Strategy. The loss of a modest amount of ivy in association with the trees to be removed is not material in biodiversity terms.

42) Effects of lighting on insects:

43) Specific impacts of LED on insects have been studied in mainland Europe but this is not applicable to Tooting Commons, where the climatic conditions are different, as are the suite of species to be found in the habitats here. To inform our assessment of the impacts of the submitted plans on this issue, in relation to the granted planning permission (ref:2019/4206) we referred to a range of published documents from specialist organisations. Most notably, Buglife in conjunction with the Institute of Lighting Professionals published a Review of the Impact of Artificial Light on Invertebrates in 2011 (Core Document 28) which concluded that "further research is required to fully understand the Impacts of artificial lighting on invertebrates" and this remains the case. Without such further published research there is no evidence available to guide the need for any further measures or alternative approaches to the design of lighting. It is of course the case that there is existing floodlighting within the application sites. As discussed above, the proposed design of the replacement lighting will have a positive effect on bat species using the area.

44) Priority species – bats:

***a) Failure* to take account of the significant increase in the use of floodlights, indicated to be in the order of 38 additional hours per week between September and May:**

i. The Council notes that bats hibernate between November and early March so will not be adversely affected during that period unless there are exceptional periods of warm dry weather which may cause them to break hibernation to forage. Between late March and late October bats are active and may be affected by artificial lighting at night. However, there is unlikely to be any need for floodlighting between late May and mid-September because of sufficient natural day light being available. Between September and November and then March to May are the times when bats might be adversely affected by any increase in

artificial light levels, intensity, duration, and changes to wavelengths. It is for this reason that Condition 5; attached to the Planning permission (ref:2019/4206) always requires that "Any and all sports pitch floodlights, should be turned off by no later than 21.00. Any additional external lighting (except emergency lights) should be on a timer and be turned off no later than 22:00 (to allow staff safe egress from the premises) or on a motion sensor activation. Floodlighting may not be used between 15th May and 15th September each year". These are measures specifically implemented to prevent harm to protected and priority species (in particular bats). The prohibition on use of floodlights between May and September is to ensure that bats can forage and commute unaffected by artificial lighting at night during the time of the year when they are most active and indeed when sufficient natural light should be available to facilitate safe sports activity.

ii. Further, the Lighting Assessment Ecology Report by Furesfen Dec 2019 states clearly in chapter 2.1 that the existing floodlights were in operation when the survey work to inform this report was undertaken. This allowed the current lighting to be measured, facilitating a comparison with the proposed lighting to be understood. This in turn informs the understanding of whether the impacts on foraging bats from the proposed (and now permitted ref: 2019/4206) lighting in future situation will be the same, better, or worse than currently when the lights are in operation

iii. Fundamentally two matters are pertinent:
   a) Are bats present? The information clearly answers that bats are present in the Triangle Field of the Common but that there are no suitable features for bats to use for roosting in or near the proposed development. There is unambiguous evidence that the preferred foraging area for bats on this part of Tooting Common is around Triangle Wood a minimum of 300m to the east of the proposals and over the canopy of the oak tree grove to the south-west of the Triangle field.
   b) Will changes to lighting adversely impact any bats present (in this case, foraging)? The information clearly answers that the changes to lighting proposed and additionally the Conditions attached to planning permission 2019/4206 will not result in any adverse impacts on bat activity. In fact, it is anticipated that bats activity may increase as a direct result of reduced lighting spill onto grass areas, clear regulatory framework on timings during times of the year when bats are active, reduce glare / reflected light, and more responsive lamps.

44b) The timing and quality of the bat surveys and bat reports submitted to inform the planning application:

i. The author of both the reports, Alison Fure, is a full member of the professional body the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management CIEEM. She is a Class 2 Bat Licence holder (Natural England licence number 2015-10381-CLS-CLS) and is well-respected authority on bats and on the impacts of lighting on bats, having authored several published papers on this matter. She is a consultant to the authors of the industry best practice document "Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK Bats and the Built Environment series" published by Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

ii. "Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines 3rd edition" (Collins 2016) published by Bat Conservation Trust sets out the industry standards for bat surveys including those to inform planning decisions. All survey methods were undertaken in accordance with this guidance and in line with The Bat Worker's Manual (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish 2004)

iii. The Bat Habitat Assessment report by Furesfen March 2019 is stipulated to be valid for one year again in accordance with industry best practice. Chapter 2.5 stipulates the limitations associated with the survey. Given the findings of this survey along with the results of other relevant biodiversity evidence the report was deemed fit for purpose to inform the planning permission (ref: 2019/4206) and this report was valid at the time the planning application was assessed. Natural England's 'standing advice' for bats refers to Bat Mitigation Guidelines published by English Nature in 2004 (Core Document 29) which state that if bats are absent or unlikely to be present or if there is no evidence of bats despite adequate survey then development may continue but that Natural England should be consulted if bats are found. Condition 4 of the granted planning permission ref 2019/4206 requires the submission for approval of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) and specifies that this must include "for all and any works to take place in the vicinity of the alcove eaves situated between the current children's centre and the boxing club buildings a toolbox talk regarding bats and details of a licenced bat worker to be called if signs of bats are found." This mitigation measure is proportionate and allows the scheme to be delivered in accordance with these guidelines. No further survey of the buildings is therefore considered necessary for the purposes of this application

iv. Whilst the planning permission decision notice is dated May 2020 the Bat Habitat Assessment report was reviewed and commented on, by me, in November 2019, within the one-year period.

44c) Suggestion of a strong likelihood in the Covid lockdown that bats have increased their presence on the Common:

There is no evidence to suggest that the Covid lockdown period has caused bat activity to increase on London's urban greenspaces, indeed the opposite may well be true. Unlike rural areas where the cessation of travel and the restriction to one daily outdoor exercise visit resulted in reduced human activity, this was not the case in urban areas. There was a huge significant increase in human activity as the 327,451 residents of Wandsworth and a considerable proportion of the 328,244 residents of Lambeth (those living close to the Common) were only permitted to undertake daily exercise locally, many choosing to use our greenspaces. There have been substantial and well documented adverse impacts to priority habitats across Tooting Commons as a direct result of this increased localised human activity, with "knock on" effects anticipated for many species' groups. The erosion of ground flora and the compaction of soils has reduced habitat available to invertebrate communities which in turn is expected to result in reduced feeding opportunities for bats. Furthermore, the details of bat records provided in March 2022 by GIGL (appendix one) demonstrates that fewer records of fewer species have been submitted to them in recent years.

44d) Further comment on the rejected application for floodlights by the Streatham and Clapham High School, that the Council's previous response failed to address the bat corridors running along the two railway lines on either side of the (proposed) development:

i. The circumstances in relation to matters at Streatham & Clapham High School (SCHS) are not pertinent to this application. Each proposal is assessed on a case-by-case basis and using relevant evidence. The SCHS is located some 400m from this site to the southwest and is near parts of Tooting Commons where the evidence demonstrates that bats will be adversely affected. This has been discussed above.

ii. In relation to this proposal under current consideration The Bat Habitat Assessment report by Furesfen March 2019 clearly states that "commuting habitat is present parallel to the railway line to the north" and so it has considered the impact of the proposals on this feature used by bats, and this is demonstrated in "table 3" of that report.

***44e) Potential damaging impact on bat population by noise disturbance*:**
The most recently published, and relevant DEFRA research (report code NO0235 "The Effects of Noise on Biodiversity" published in 2011) (Core Document 30) on the issue of noise impacts on biodiversity concluded "*the major finding is that a strong evidence base does not exist regarding the potential impact of anthropogenic noise on non-marine UK priority species or species of principle importance*"

44f) General comments:
Conditions were attached to the granted planning permission (ref:2019/4206) to ensure that the scheme can be built in accordance with the submitted plans and places a further obligation on the applicant to prevent harm to biodiversity throughout construction and further still, seeks post construction commitments to ensure that the proposals will have been appropriately delivered to prevent harm to and to actively benefit biodiversity: Condition 4 requires the submission for approval of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to ensure that construction methodologies and on-site staff awareness and training will prevent inadvertent harm to priority species. The would be expected to contain a clear approach to timing of works to ensure that any nesting birds will not be adversely impacted.

45) Overall Summary and Conclusion
The application proposes changes to existing buildings, small garden, one hard surface sports area and replacement floodlighting. I determined that the proposals would have no direct or indirect impact on priority habitats on Tooting Common. With regard to priority species, I determined that the proposals would have no impact on house sparrow, starling, swift, stag beetles. I determined that there would be a negligible impact on pollinators through changes to the small garden area, and I determined that there would be a moderate beneficial impact on bats from changes to floodlighting. Overall, there would be no change to the designation of the site as one of metropolitan important (SMI) for London. Whilst bats have been found to be foraging and commuting nearby, the measures applied by means of conditions attached to planning permission prevent harm to biodiversity during construction, and the completed scheme will bring about permanent improvements to for biodiversity specifically, to benefit bats and support their continued presence in this area. Specifically, improvements to floodlighting will reduce light spill and allow bats to use the adjacent grass areas for forage and commuting. To ensure that the scheme is delivered as proposed, and to prevent harm and provide gain for biodiversity, in accordance with Local Plan policy DOM4a & b, conditions have been attached to the granted planning permission (ref 2019/4206) to ensure that: Condition 4 - construction methods will not cause harm to priority species; Condition 5 – the floodlighting is built and operates in accordance with submitted plans including specifying times of the day and months of the year when lighting may not be used; Condition 7 secures additional planting to provide gains for biodiversity.

Appendix one

Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC
the capital's environmental records centre

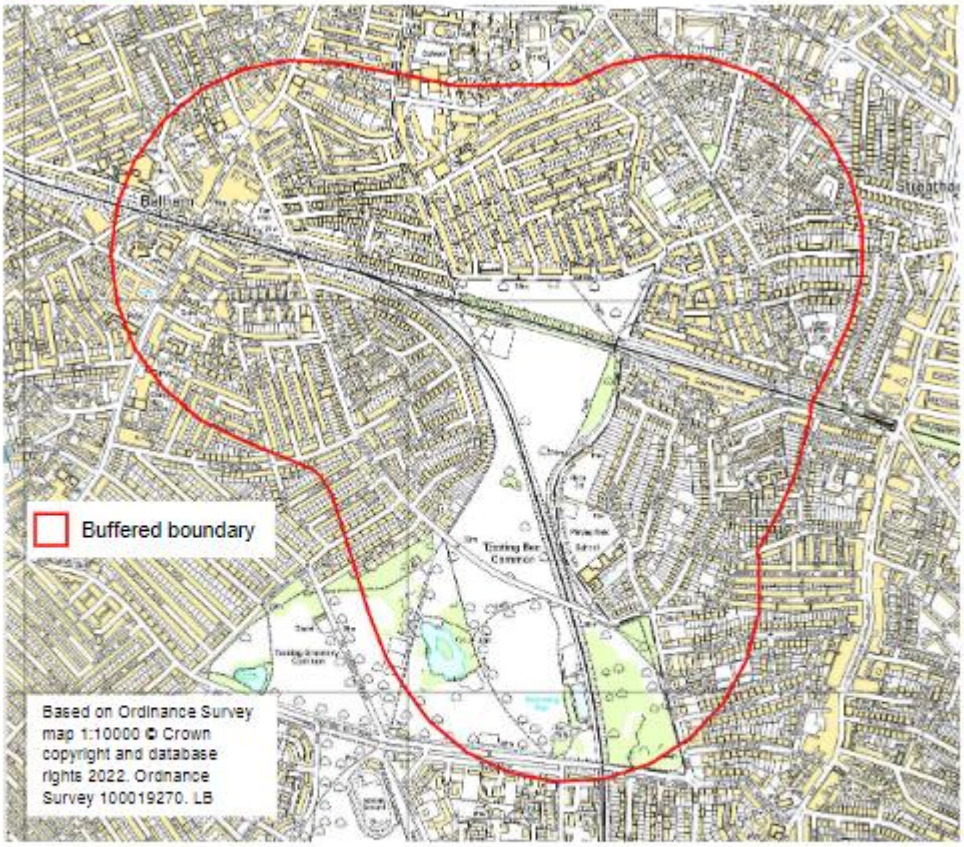
Tooting Bec Triangle Bat Records

Produced on 17th March 2022 by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC on behalf of the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL) is London's local environmental records centre. We mobilise, curate and share access to high quality data via services that enable our stakeholders to make informed decisions about London's natural environment in policy and practice.

This document is compiled using data held by GiGL at the time of the request. Please note that all UK bat species are protected and their record locations are deemed sensitive. The species tables in this summary report indicate a record somewhere within a 500m radius of Tooting Bec Triangle (see map).

Search area:



1

1 of 2

GiGL Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC
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Species records:

Bat records 2012-2022			
Taxon Name	**Common Name**	**Count of records**	**GiGL data providers**
Nyctalus noctula	Noctule Bat	3	LB Wandsworth
Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Common Pipistrelle	12	London Bat Group and LB Wandsworth
Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Soprano Pipistrelle	3	iRecord and ecological consultant

Bat records pre-2012			
Taxon Name	**Common Name**	**Count of records**	**GiGL data providers**
Nyctalus leisleri	Lesser Noctule	1	London Bat Group
Pipistrellus	Pipistrelle Bat species	4	London Bat Group
Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Common Pipistrelle	10	London Bat Group and LB Wandsworth
Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Soprano Pipistrelle	1	London Bat Group
Vespertilionidae	Vesper Bat species	6	London Bat Group, LB Wandsworth and London Wildlife Trust