

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS – SMALL SITES INITIATIVE LARK ROW, E2 9JA

Summary Report

AUGUST 2019



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1 Introduction

Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited (Arcadis) has been commissioned by London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) 'the Client' to undertake a number of technical surveys for a site referred to as Lark Row, London, E2 9JA ('the Site').

LBTH is seeking to unlock small, publicly owned sites in the borough. This is with the aim to increase the supply of small surplus sites to market, potentially increase affordable housing availability and, at the same time, to encourage individual and community led housebuilders to take on the sites for development.

This report provides a summary of the technical surveys commissioned for the Site and reference should be made to the individual reports for further detailed information.

The Site covers approximately 0.026 hectares and is located in a residential area, bounded by the Grand Union Canal to the east and north, industrial building to the west and lark to the south. The Site is centred on National Grid reference 535092, 183579.

The surveys carried out for Lark Row comprise the following;

- Topographical Survey (Ref 1);
- Archaeological Desktop Review (Ref 2);
- Ecology Assessment (Ref 3);
- Arboricultural Survey (Ref 4); and
- Geotechnical and Geo-Environmental Desk Study Report (Ref 5)

A summary of the findings of these surveys are detailed in the following sections.

2 Topographical Survey

The topography of the site is generally flat and at approximately 16.0-16.5m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Site survey plans show the Site to be mostly undergrowth to the east and paving to the west with numerous flower beds scattered across the paved portion of the Site. The Site is boarded to the west by an industrial building and to the north and east by brick walls and metal fencing. Posts are detailed to follow the northern border and bollards across the southern border, along a Tarmac footpath. There are 2 mature trees documented on Site.

3 Archaeology Desktop Review

An archaeological desk-top review for the Site has been carried out. This involved rapid information-gathering and review of the Site and a 500m study area using information from publicly held sources. A brief assessment of potential heritage/archaeological constraints and opportunities at the Site has been made.

Based on the current data, a total of 50 non-designated heritage assets and 13 previous archaeological events have been recorded within the 500m study area. None of these assets or events are located within the Site itself. Most known heritage assets within the 500m study area date to the Medieval, Post-Medieval period and Modern periods.

The Site does not lie within an Archaeological Priority Area. However, there is potential for buried archaeological remains to survive at the Site, particularly from the medieval period and the 19th century. In the 19th century the Site was occupied by buildings including a workhouse. A mortuary (presumably attached to the workhouse) was added in the late 19th century and it is possible that burials of the occupants remain on Site. It is possible that these 19th and 20th century buildings may have damaged earlier archaeological remains.

There is also a possibility of Pleistocene (Ice Age) activity being preserved in the river gravels.

There are no designated heritage assets within the Site itself. However, any proposed future development of the Site will likely have to consider potential impacts to the setting and character of the two nearest Conservation Areas – Regents Canal which is adjacent to the Site and Victoria Park which is also a Registered Park and Garden. The setting of the scheduled Bonners Bridge which crosses the canal to the south-east is also of relevance. The setting of the Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings are not considered to extend into the Site area due to intervening built form.

For any future planning application, early consultation with The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) is recommended to fully understand the requirements to inform a planning application for the Site. An archaeological desk-based assessment will likely be a minimum requirement. The Borough's Conservation Officer should also be contacted to discuss the potential impacts to the setting of the Conservation Areas/ Registered Park and Garden.

4 Ecology Assessment

The ecological assessment comprised a desk-based study using publicly available information and an ecological constraints survey to identify potential constraints present on Site.

Based on the assessment undertaken to date, there are no likely significant ecological constraints with regards to the development of this Site.

No Statutory or non-statutory designated sites (including ancient woodlands or woodlands listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) identified within the vicinity of the Site have the potential to be significantly impacted by development on the Site.

A number of non-statutory designations are present within the area surrounding the Site, the closest of which is a portion of London Canal's (Regent's Canal) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) (M006), located immediately to the north of the Site. Similarly, Victoria Park SINC (THBI01) is also located in close proximity to the Site, being position approximately 35m to the north-east of the Site. Due to the proximity to the Site, recreational pressures on the above designated sites were considered, however due to the size of the Site and the limited number of units that the developable area could accommodate, it is considered that additional recreational pressures as a result of any future development will be of negligible impact to the designations.

Nevertheless, given the proximity of the Site to the London Canal's SINC, it is recommended that any future construction works within the Site follow the best management practice (PPG1) for activities such as storage of fuels, chemicals and oils, vehicle washing. Should such practices be followed, this will effectively reduce potential pollution effects to nil, minimising any harm to wildlife associated with London Canal's SINC, and any connecting watercourses.

Sensitive lighting strategy during construction and incorporated into the design should be considered in order to avoid disrupting the wildlife dark corridor along the Regent's Canal.

Constraints are listed below:

- The Site was dominated by hardstanding interspersed with areas of introduced shrub/ amenity planting, along with areas of ephemeral/ short perennial vegetation, scattered and dense scrub and a number of scattered trees. The habitats on Site were generally un-diverse due to the lack of positive management. However, these habitats have value in terms of green infrastructure, likely performing important ecosystem services (such as water quality and volume attenuation and air quality attenuation etc.).
- Due to the Site proximity to the Regent's Canal, there is potential to disturb the dark corridor along the Canal which is likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats. A lighting strategy is recommended during the construction and design of the proposed development to minimise light spill into the dark corridor. The trees located along the northern boundary of the Site should be retained to maintain a buffer between the Site and the Canal.
- There is potential for nesting birds to be utilising the trees within the Site, including species listed on S41 and the London BAP such as house sparrow. Removal of suitable vegetation on Site will need to be conducted outside of the bird nesting season (March – August inclusive) or under an ecological watching brief.
- There will be some ecological benefit from the removal of non-native and invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the WCA and on LSI, which is likely to occur when the Site is cleared for any construction. Whilst there is a legal requirement to prevent the growth and spread of Schedule 9 species (Virginia Creeper), there is no legal obligation to control the LSI species (Cherry Laurel, Butterfly-bush and Green Alkanet) recorded on the Site or to remove it as controlled waste, but it is good practice to remove such species and to prevent their spread.
- Trees and other vegetation should be replaced within any proposed soft landscaping and these designs should be evolved in liaison with an ecologist and arboriculturist. In addition, rain gardens, biodiversity roofs and other green infrastructure should be considered within any development.
- Biodiversity net gain is due to become mandatory for new development. There are opportunities for the incorporation of integral bird and bat boxes, micro SuDS, the implementation of permeable fencing to benefit small mammals such as hedgehog which is a priority species currently in decline, sensitive lighting strategy, tree replacement and new tree planting where feasible.

5 Arboricultural Survey

An arboricultural constraints walkover and assessment was conducted to describe the general arboricultural features and potential constraints with regards to trees on Site.

A total of nine arboricultural items were recorded within the study area as follows:

- Nine individual trees on-Site

No individual trees were graded Category A (trees of high quality). Two individual trees were graded as Category B (trees of moderate quality). Seven individual trees were graded as Category C (trees of low quality). No individual trees have been graded as Category U (trees of poor quality unsuitable for retention).

There is currently no proposed design layout and therefore it is not possible to say whether the trees would need to be removed and if there is space for any new trees to be re-provisioned on the Site. This can be determined once designs are developed.

While unlikely to prevent development, tree protection for trees to be retained and tree re-provisioning for any trees lost due to development are a material consideration for planning determination. If trees cannot be replaced on-Site due to development, off-Site options for tree re-provisioning to ensure no net loss should be considered. Individual Local Planning Authorities may ask for re-provisioning in excess of 1 to 1 for trees of Category B grade.

Where trees are statutorily protected, such as a TPO or within a Conservation Area, it is usually a requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations (2012) to contact the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and follow the appropriate procedures before undertaking any works that might affect the protected trees. For such trees all non-routine tree works including works to enable development must have Conservation Area Consent or Full Planning Consent from the LPA before the tree works take place. The application to the LPA to remove or undertake works on such trees requires a decision which can often take at least 2 months. This report when submitted as part of a planning application would constitute such an application.

The main development considerations for the trees are:

- The Site is located within a Conservation Area (Regent's Canal);
- The protection of trees on site to be retained; and
- The planting location, height, width and density of the crowns will cast shade on to the Site.

Should any future proposed development require tree removals or RPA incursions within RPAs of the retained trees an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) will be required by the LPA in support of a planning application.

A bespoke Arboricultural Method Statement may be required post planning and when the construction details are known to protect the retained trees within and adjoining the Site.

All new tree planting should be in accordance with British Standard 8545: Trees: From Nursery to Independence in the Landscape – Recommendations, 2014 and all tree works must be carried out by a qualified contractor in accordance with BS3998:2010: Tree Work – Recommendations.

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6 Geotechnical and Geo-Environmental Desk Study

The geo-environmental and geotechnical desk study comprises a review of existing historical and current information on the Site. No intrusive site investigations have taken place.

The Site is currently an undeveloped and publicly accessible plot of land with an electrical substation to the west and small trees predominantly to the east. The Grand Union Canal is located immediately to the north of the Site.

Historically, the Site was previously part of Bethnal Green Workhouse with a mortuary shown on historical mapping. Further non-specific structures were present on the Site until 1991, after which the Site is shown as undeveloped land. Made Ground is therefore anticipated to be present as a result of this.

Potential risks to human health, controlled waters and the built environment have been identified along with a number of potential geotechnical development constraints. It is recommended that an intrusive site investigation should be undertaken prior to redevelopment to quantify these risks and collect information to inform redevelopment design. This should include for chemical and geotechnical testing of soils, groundwater (if present) and gas monitoring in accordance with best practice and current guidance.

Potential founding solutions will be dependent on the encountered thickness of Made Ground and the geotechnical properties of the natural deposits, and the proposed development. Made Ground is generally considered unsuitable for foundations due to its variable composition and its potential for high total and differential settlement.

At this stage and depending on the redevelopment, conventional shallow foundations may not be appropriate for the site, but this would depend on the thickness of the Made Ground and the underlying ground conditions. Deeper trench fill may be possible although the maximum practical extent of this type of foundation is in the region of 2-2.5m. In areas of deeper Made Ground, or where deeper soft / loose bands are recorded either piling or ground treatment e.g. vibro-stone columns should provide a suitable foundation solution. The advice of a specialist ground improvement contractor should be sought to verify the suitability of the ground for treatment.

Should excavation be required in the vicinity of the Grand Union Canal professional advice should be obtained to ensure the integrity of the canal structure is protected.

There is a potential risk from UXO, and it is recommended that a site-specific detailed desk study is undertaken prior to any intrusive investigations or earthworks. A watching brief from a UXO specialist may be required.

Underground services may be present on the which will need to be taken into consideration during the proposed development.

7 References

- 1) John Vincent Surveys (2019), Lark Row, Tower Hamlets Site Survey
- 2) Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited (2019) Small Sites Initiative, Lark Row, E2 9JA, Archaeology Desktop Review (Report Number 10030721-ARC-11-XX-RP-YY-0001-01-Archaeology Desktop Review)
- 3) Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited (2019) Small Sites Initiative Lark Row, E2 9JA Ecological Assessment (Report Number 10030721-ARC-11-XX-RP-YY-0001-01-Ecological Assessment)
- 4) Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited (2019) Small Sites Initiative Lark Row, E2 9JA Preliminary BS5837:2012 Tree Survey Report (Report Number 10030721-ARC 11-XX-RP-YY-0001-01-Arboricultural Report)
- 5) Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited ((2019) Lark Row, E2 9JA Geotechnical and Geo Environmental Desk Study (Report Number 10030721-ARC-11-XX-RP-YY-0001-01-Geotechnical and Environmental Desk Study)

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