ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER REPORT

Wootton Street (Coral Day Nursery)
Lambeth
SE1 8AZ

Report for:
HFL Build Limited
PO Box 76052
London
SW2 9NT

Introduction

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commission by Homes for Lambeth to carry out an ecological survey of the above site. The purpose of the survey was to determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas and to record any evidence of protected species. This information will serve to assess the ecological impact of the proposals and identify any ecological constraints and/or mitigation measures that may be required. A series of photographs and a site location plan have been attached for reference.

The proposals are for the demolition and clearance of existing structures and redevelopment comprising construction of a part 5/8/10 storey mixed use building comprising replacement community floorspace on ground floor, 36 no. residential units (Class C3) above with associated resident amenities, cycle parking, car parking and public realm enhancement.

Methodology

Baseline Data

As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and whether any European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) have been granted within 2 km of the site. In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land and the Environment Agency's website PlantTracker (http://www.planttracker.org.uk/map/knotweed) was consulted to determine whether there are any confirmed records of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) located on or adjacent to the site.

Walk-over Site Survey

The survey was completed on Thursday 8 October 2020, during which particular attention was paid to record the presence of badgers, bats and herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) that may be using the sites or present in adjacent habitats, in accordance with the following survey methodologies:

Badgers

Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected by the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992,* under which it is an offence to harm badgers or their setts. A sett is defined as "*any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger*". Natural England has provided the following guidance on the interpretation of current use:

A sett is defined as such (and thus protected) as long as signs indicative of 'current use' are present. Thus, a sett remains protected by the Act until such times as the signs (i.e. 'field signs') have deteriorated or decayed to such an extent that they indicate that the sett is no longer in 'current use'.

A thorough survey of each site and adjacent habitats, where access was available, was carried out. Particular attention was paid to dense areas of vegetation to check for any evidence of badger activity, which is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- presence of holes with evidence of badger, such as footprints, discarded hair, etc.;
- presence of dung pits and latrines;
- presence of well-used runs with subsidiary evidence of badger activity; and
- presence of other indications of badger activity, such as signs of foraging and footprints.

Bats

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats, or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities. The survey was carried out following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust[1]. A thorough external examination of the existing building was carried out, with any potential access points inspected for evidence of bats[2]. In addition, a careful inspection of each tree on the site was carried out to identify those features that are important for roosting bats. Surveying trees presents particular problems at any time of the year as bats will use a wide variety of roost sites in cavities, splits, cracks, knotholes and under loose bark, many of which are not easily detected from the ground.

Each tree was assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- **Negligible** – negligible habitat features likely to be used by roosting bats.
- **Low** – a tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features (PRFs) but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
- **Moderate** – a 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 to support a roost of high conservation status.
- **High** – a 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.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. A heterodyne bat detector (Pettersson D200) was also utilised to record any bat calls during the survey.

[1] Collins, J. (ed) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
[2] Access into the building was not possible under the current restrictions imposed by the Government due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Herpetofauna

Amphibians
All amphibian species have some level of protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

Reptiles
All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of *Section 9(1)* and all of *Section 9(5).* This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.

An assessment of each site was carried out to determine its suitability for herpetofauna by recording the habitats present. In addition, any natural/artificial refugia present was lifted to check for any sheltering animals or evidence of animals, such as sloughs (shed skins).

Other Wildlife
In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

Results

Baseline Data

According to the Multi-agency website, there are no ecologically statutory designated sites located on or directly adjacent to the site, nor are there any within the 2 km search area. The nearest statutory designated site is Battersea Park Nature Areas Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located 3.7 km to the south-west. There are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) located on or adjacent to the site, with the closest being an area of Mudflats, located approximately 0.5 km to the north.

There was a single record of an EPSL being granted within 2 km of the site, located 1.2 km to the south-west and allowing the destruction of a resting place for common (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats (reference 2015-7747-EPS-MIT).

Google Earth Imagery shows that the site has remained largely unchanged since at least 2002, being dominated by the existing buildings and hardstanding areas, with restricted amenity grassland and individual trees at the site boundaries.

According to the PlantTracker website, there are no records of Japanese knotweed located on or near to the site, with the closest record located approximately 2.6 km to the south-south-east.

Site Description (Photographs 1 – 4)

The site is currently occupied by the Coral Day Nursery and is located on the corner of Wootton Street and Greet Street in the London Borough of Lambeth, centred at National Grid Reference: TQ 314800 and covers approximately 0.2 of a hectare. The site comprised the existing building, with associated hardstanding (including car park) and restricted public open space. It is borded by Wootton Street to the north, Greet Street to the east, an unnamed street to the south, with a block of flats to the west (Figure 1).

The Coral Day Nursery was a single storey building of masonry construction, with a felted flat roof. There were timber soffits/fascias and barge boards present, which appeared well-sealed. A series of sky lights were present in the roof, with a number of windows at the front and rear elevations, creating a well-lit interior.

A play area was present to the rear of the nursery, comprising of artificial turf and a range of play equipment. Ornamental planting recorded within the play area was limited to butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*). An area of hardstanding, including a car park and seating area was present on the south of the site. Limited ornamental planting included cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), butterfly-bush, fatsia (*Fatsia japonica*) and privet (*Ligustrum sp.*), with a mature oak (*Quercus sp.*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) tree also present. The northern and eastern site boundaries were dominated by lawns, with the species typical of amenity grassland, including perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), clover (*Trifolium sp.*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). A mature tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) was present on the northern site boundary, along with a number of self-seeded tree-of-heaven saplings.

Badgers

No evidence of badger or their setts was recorded on the site or in the surrounding area.

Bats

No evidence of bats was recorded during a thorough external inspection of the building. The building was in overall good condition, with no potential access points for bats recorded. The well-sealed flat roof and lack of any separate roof voids does not provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats.

The trees recorded on the site were assessed to provide **negligible** to **low** roosting opportunities for bats due to their age and condition and lacking any PRFs. The site, due to its restricted size and location in a well-lit and built-up area of London provided only limited foraging habitat for bats.

Herpetofauna

There were no ponds on site and therefore no breeding opportunities for amphibians. The site, being dominated by buildings, hardstanding and lawns, did not provide suitable terrestrial habitat for any species of herpetofauna. The site is located in a built-up area of London, lacking any direct connectivity to any semi-natural habitat within the surrounding area. In addition, despite a careful search of the site, no species of herpetofauna was seen or found sheltering under any refugia lifted.

Other Wildlife

Apart from a few common species of birds, either recorded on the sites or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposals are for the demolition and clearance of existing structures and redevelopment comprising construction of a part 5/8/10 storey mixed use building comprising replacement community floorspace on ground floor, 36 no. residential units (Class C3) above with associated resident amenities, cycle parking, car parking and public realm enhancement.

There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded.

Although there are considered to be no ecological constraints to the proposals, a series of generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, should be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019[3].

Although no evidence of bats was recorded, with the building unlikely to support any roosting bats, a follow-up check by an experienced and suitably licensed ecologist should be completed prior to demolition works to ensure there has been no change in the findings, with a full internal check completed. In the unlikely event of any bats or evidence of bats being encountered, then further measures in accordance with current guidelines should be implemented as necessary.

In the event that any of the more mature trees are to be felled, then these should be felled by competent Tree Surgeons, who are fully aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Therefore, site clearance works should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season, which, in general, runs from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a check should be carried out prior to any clearance works to ensure there are no active nests present.

In order to protect any vegetation to be retained, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'.

Where any new planting is proposed it should aim to use native species, but where this is not practicable then species of known value for wildlife can be used. In particular, flowering plants will be of benefit to invertebrate species and shrubs and trees may provide nesting opportunities for birds once they become established. Biodiverse roofs will also be included, which will provide additional habitat for a range of species.

Any new boundary treatment should be designed to promote permeability of the site to minimise fragmentation and allow free movement of wildlife throughout the site, for example by strengthening/enhancing the existing boundary vegetation, planting up a series of new hedgerows and/or installing post and rail fences. These measures will strengthen habitat connectivity and provide additional foraging habitat, cover and nesting opportunities. If close boarded fences are required for security reasons these should be minimised and raised slightly off the ground (c. 150-200 mm) to allow animals to pass underneath.

The site could be further enhanced by providing roosting and nesting opportunities for bats and birds by installing a series of bat and bird boxes. Any boxes installed will be positioned in accordance with good practice.

The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. Although the site currently experiences high levels of light spillage from surrounding sources, in accordance with good practice, any new lighting to be introduced should be designed to minimise light spillage and pollution and not directed onto any bird/bat boxes installed.

[3] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London.

Overall the findings of this ecological survey indicate that there are no over-riding ecological constraints to the proposals that would preclude planning permission being granted at this stage, subject to an appropriately worded condition. There are no statutory designated sites that would be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals and the site is of overall limited ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded. A range of mitigation measures have been suggested and, if implemented effectively, would ensure that there would be no adverse impact on local wildlife that are using the site, along with control measures to be applied to ensure that there is no contravention of current legislation. In addition, enhancement measures can be delivered to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term, in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework.

Author:
Alan Beaumont
BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM
Director of Ecology
E alan.beaumont@aae-ltd.co.uk

Office:
AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon
Oxon OX13 6HX

Company No. 8474322
E info@aae-ltd.co.uk
T 01235 536042
F 01235 523849

Photograph Record Sheet

Photograph 1: Showing the front of the Nursery, off Wootton Street.

Photograph 2: Showing the restricted area of Public Open Space.

Photograph 3: Showing the existing carpark and restricted ornamental planting.

Photograph 4: Showing the front and side elevation of the building, with the mature Tree-of-heaven to the north.

Rev.	Details	Drawn / Chkd.	Date

PROJECT

Wootton Street (Coral Day Nursery)
Lambeth

TITLE

Photograph Record Sheet

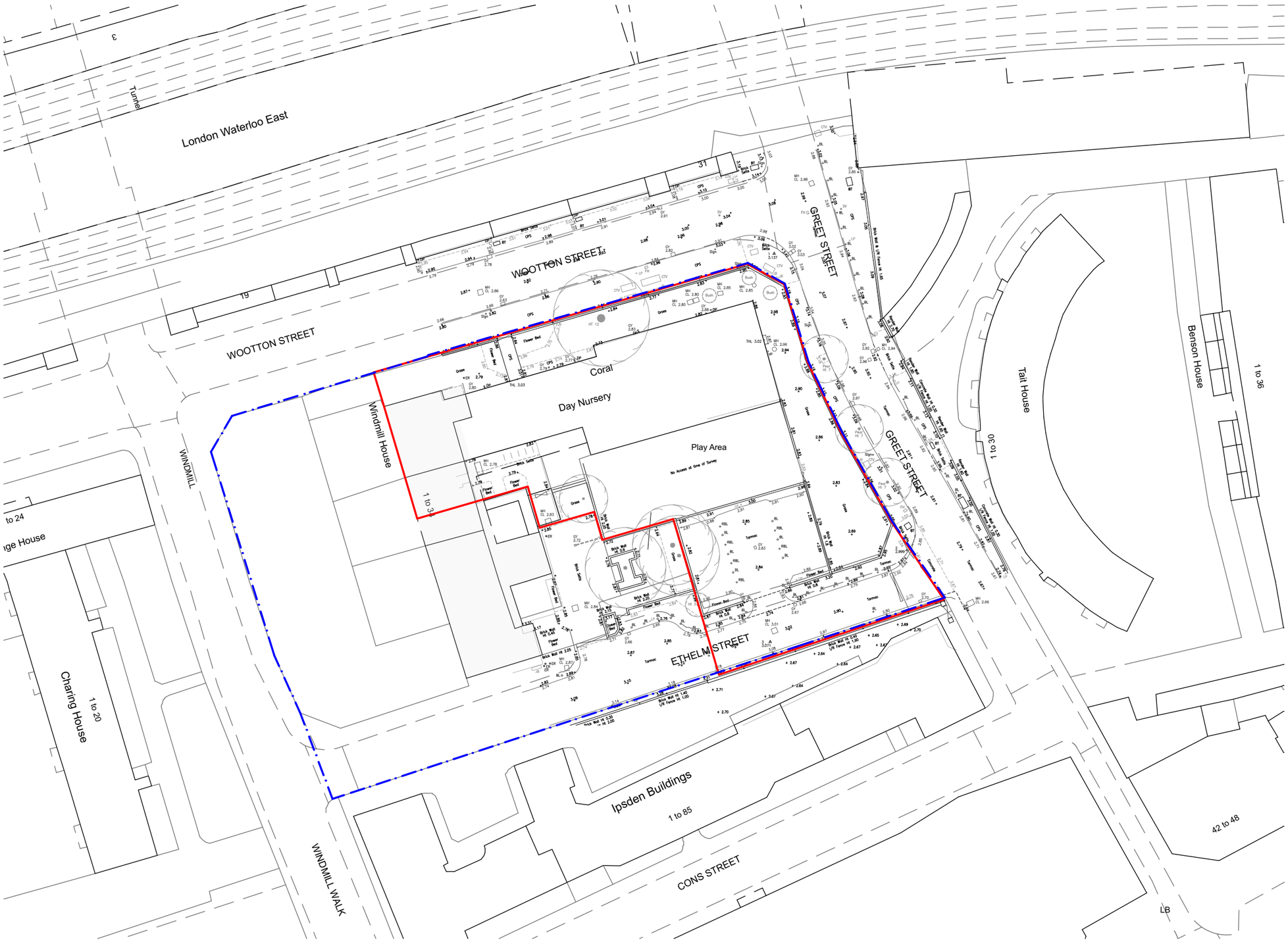
AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon Abingdon
Oxon OX13 6HX

T: 01235 536042
F: 01235 523849
info@aae-ltd.co.uk
www.aae-ltd.co.uk

Environmental Consultants

Scale	Date	Drawn	Chkd.	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	15.12.20	HRS	ARB	193383/01	

Figure 1
Site Location Plan



N

KEY

Application boundary

Land owned by LBL

rev	date	description
P1 - WIP		Work in Progress

0 5 10 15m

HFL HOMES FOR LAMBETH

stock wool

The Pump House 19 Hooper Street
London E1 8BU 020 7264 8600
info@stockwool.co.uk

Client
HOMES FOR LAMBETH

Project
WOOTTON STREET

Drawing
EXISTING LOCATION PLAN

Status
PLANNING

Scale **1:500@A3**

CAD File 3496W-Wootton-MainModel
Date **14/12/2020**
Drawn **AB/DF**
Checked **PM**

Project no_Drawing no_Revision
3496W_PL(90)100_P1 - WIP

KEY