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18 September 2008



Hannah Richardson
Spawforths
Junction 41 Business Court
Ardsley
Leeds
West Yorkshire
WF3 2AB

Dear Hannah

Lowfield Road, Bolton-Upon-Dearne Ecological Constraints Survey

This letter report presents the findings of an ecological constraints survey of a site at Lowfield Road, Bolton-Upon-Dearne. It was commissioned by Spawforths, on behalf of Horizon Residential Developments Ltd, and was undertaken by WSP Environmental Ltd. Horizon Residential Developments Ltd requires information to accompany a planning application for the proposed residential development of the site.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in December 2005 by WSPE (12267084-001 Ecological Report v1(19.06.06)). The Survey identified five buildings, hard standing, semi-improved grassland, scrub and tall ruderal present on the site. Habitat suitable for nesting birds, reptiles and foraging bats was identified, and further survey for reptiles were recommended. The aim of this Ecological Constraints Survey is to provide an update to the 2005 Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey.

Constraints Survey

The ecological constraints survey was undertaken on 15th September 2008. Weather conditions at the time of survey were fine; dry with a constant temperature of 17.5°C and a wind speed 6mph.

All buildings with the exception of B4 (Plate 1) have been demolished and the remaining rubble has been flattened (Plate 2). Ephemeral vegetation has colonised across these areas and in areas where the hard standing has begun to break up. Building 4 was briefly inspected from the exterior and is considered unsuitable to support bats; lacking in suitable roosting features.

The large area of tall ruderal to the south of the site has developed into semi-improved grassland interspersed with tall ruderal species including common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) (Plate 3). Scrub has also developed across this area including bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), buddleia (*Buddleia x davidii*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*). The patchwork of tall ruderal vegetation and areas of semi-improved grassland provide suitable habitat for common reptile species such as common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*).

WSP Environment & Energy
The Victoria
150-182 The Quays
Salford
Manchester
M50 3SP
Tel: +44 (0)161 886 2400
Fax: +44 (0)161 886 2401
<http://www.wspgroup.com>

WSP Group plc
Offices worldwide

The areas of semi-improved grassland to the north east boundary have become encroached by tall ruderal dominated by common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and common nettle. Further more, the area of semi-improved grassland alongside hedgerow 2 has been lost to compacted rubble, although a strip of tall ruderal and ephemeral vegetation remains adjacent to the hedgerow.

The developing woodland recorded along the western boundary in 2005 has been greatly reduced to a thin band of trees, dominated by young silver birch (Plate 4).

The remainder of the habitats on site are largely the same as in 2005, scrub and hedgerows having matured over the last three years. No non-native invasive species were recorded on site.

Recommendations

Nesting Birds

All species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*). This makes it illegal to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; and
- Intentionally take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Habitat is present for foraging and nesting birds including scrub and trees. Where these areas are to be lost through development, vegetation clearance should take place outside the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive).

Where avoidance of this period isn't possible, a nesting bird survey should be carried out by a competent ecologist prior to removal of any areas of suitable habitat to ensure that no active nests are destroyed. Where active nests are discovered, they should be left with a suitable buffer until an ecologist has confirmed that the young birds have fledged and are no longer dependant on the nest.

Reptiles

Suitable habitat is present for reptiles on the site. The UK's four more common reptile species are widespread throughout the region (Beebee & Griffiths 2000), these are - common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*), grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). The UK's two rarer species of reptile, sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) are not known in the region.

The four native species of reptiles are all afforded a level of protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) through their inclusion in Section 9, Schedule 5. It is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take a reptile or take its eggs; and

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- transport with the intention to sell or sell a reptile.

It is recommended that a specific survey for reptiles is undertaken at the site prior to development. The optimal season for reptile surveys is from March to June and September/October. Surveys are limited by high temperatures during July and August; peak survey months are April, May and September.

In summary, although some of the habitats on site have changed the overall ecological value of the site and potential to support protected species remains the same, and therefore recommendations made in the 2005 ecology report are still valid.

I hope that the enclosed information provides you with the necessary details that you require and we would be happy to help you address the issues raised. If you have any queries regarding the above or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Rolls' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nadine Rolls
Consultant Ecologist
DDI: 0161 886 2662

Plate 1 Building B4

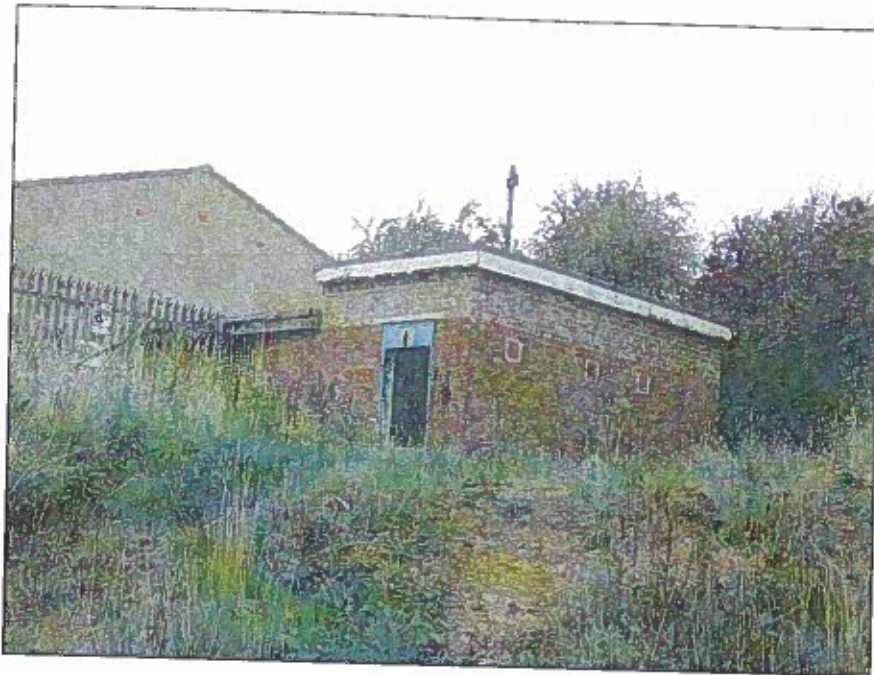


Plate 2 Compacted rubble from demolished buildings

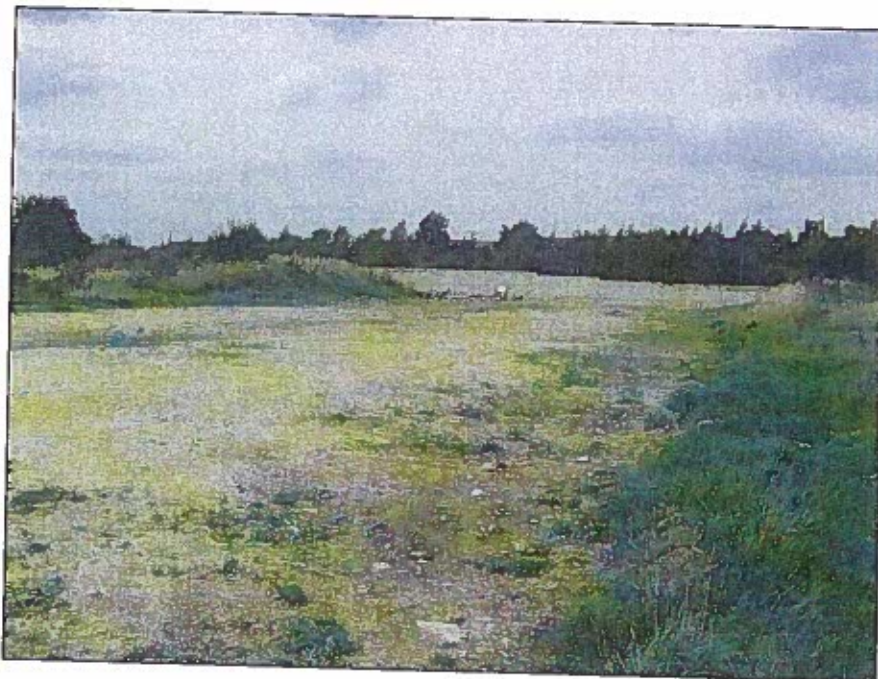


Plate 3 Semi-improved grassland

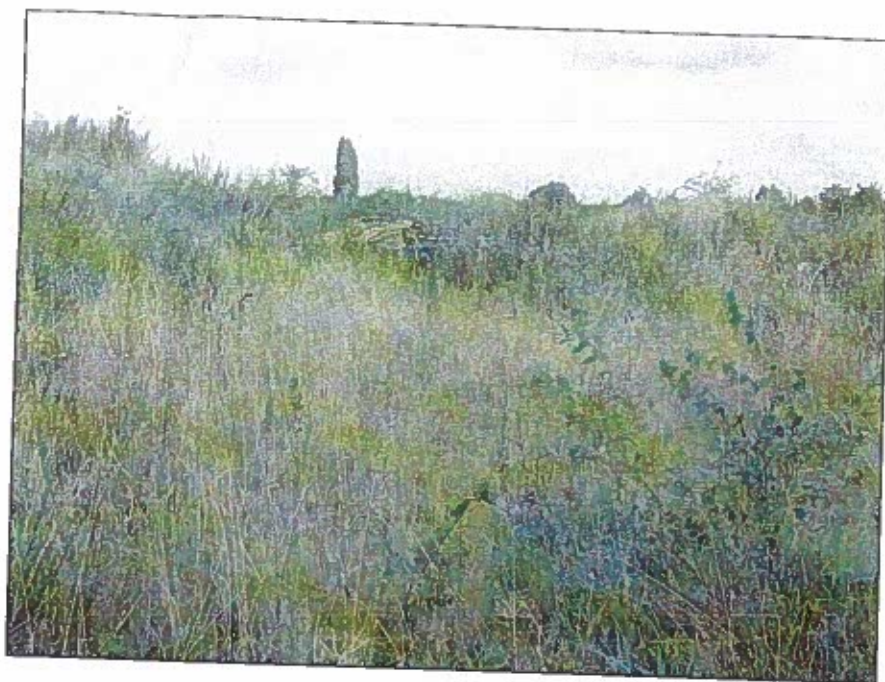


Plate 4 Remnants of developing woodland

