Ecological Overview – Bellbrooke Avenue, Darfield.

Current Ecological Significance

C.1 The site covers an area of approximately 9366m^2 and is largely surrounded by dense residential housing and arable land.

C.2 The construction zone is currently covered by a matrix of different habitats, including hardstanding, fertile mown grassland, unmanaged grassland and lowland woodland.

C.3 Habitats surrounding the site are similar to those found within the construction zone, with buildings, hardstanding and gardens forming much of the local landscape. Within the wider area the dominant landscape is residential and arable.

C.4 Figures 1 and 2 show the location of Bellbrooke Avenue at the local and wider landscape scale.

Figure 1 – Location of Bellbrooke Avenue within local landscape context



Figure 2 – Location of Bellbrooke Avenue in wider landscape context



Bellbrooke Avenue Development Site

Site Habitats

Hardstanding

C.5 The construction zone consists of hardstanding in the form of access on site. Overall the hardstanding is ecologically impoverished and has, therefore, been deemed to have no ecological value.

Grassland

C.6 Grassland was located in the gardens of existing properties and where demolished properties previously stood. Due to previous management the grass was short and there was no evidence of succession to scrub. Species identified include dandelion, thistle, dock and a range of grasses. The grassland has been deemed to have limited ecological value due to low structural diversity.

Lowland Woodland (Trees & hedges)

C.7 A tree survey was undertaken by Welch Landscape Design on 2nd December 2008. The site survey identified broadleaved woodland which was predominately located in the gardens of residential properties. Species identified within the developable area include holly, hawthorn, sycamore, lilac, elderberry, cherry, apple, Leyland cypress, privet, rowan and false cypress.

C.8 A number of shrubs were also located in private gardens which consisted predominately of non native ornamental species. Native species or species of high wildlife value which were identified on site include hebe sp, buddleia, cotoneaster sp, and elder.

C.9 Lowland woodland varied in both size and condition. In addition to the trees and shrubs there were also areas of bramble, creepers and climbers (ivy) located to the rear of the properties on site.

C.10 The post development plans confirm that the lowland woodland on site is unlikely to remain during the construction phase and clearance should take place outside of the British Bird Breeding Season (March-August), see Eco3 for further details.

C.11 A number of trees are located outside of the site boundary. These trees are outside of the developable area, however due to their size and species they have been deemed to have ecological value and should, therefore, receive appropriate protection in accordance with BS5837:2005 'trees in relation to construction'. During the construction phase of works disturbance should be kept to a minimum, taking into account the British breeding season.[1]

C.12 Whilst a number of native species were identified on site, the condition of the species identified means they are of little ecological value. The tree

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[1] *All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 – this makes it an offence, with certain exceptions , to deliberately take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. It is also illegal to take and destroy the egg of any wild bird.*

survey states 'apart from the retention of hedgerow 4 along Edderthorpe Lane, we consider it would be best to treat this site as a 'blank canvas' and simply clear the site of any trees and shrubs and ensure that new trees are planted'.

C.13 Providing the hedgerow along Edderthorpe Lane is protected throughout the development it is felt that the removal of lowland woodland will not affect the ecological value of the site.

Buildings

C.14 A number of vacated residential properties are located on site. The buildings have the potential to support roosting bats in loft spaces, ridge beams or around ducting and cladding. It is an offence to kill, injure or disturb bats, obstruct access to bat roosts, or to damage or disturb roosts (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).

C.15 Therefore, the developer must ensure that a bat survey is undertaken prior to demolition. If evidence of nesting birds is found within the buildings and the buildings are due to be demolished during the British Bird Breeding Season (March-August) a through nesting bird survey should be undertaken prior to beginning destructive works.

C.16 *Fauna*

The presence of lowland woodland and grassland within the construction zone would indicate the possibility of birds being present in and around the site. Since all trees are being removed to facilitate the development careful consideration should be given to breeding birds. Removal of the lowland woodland should take place outside of the British Bird Breeding season (March- Early September).

C.17 No evidence of badger setts was recorded during the site survey, and it is felt that the topography of the surrounding landscape would not support them. In addition there are no waterbodies or watercourses within 500m, therefore, amphibians are not a concern at Bellbrooke Avenue.

C.18 All sites are examined to assess the likelihood that they could be used as roosting habitats for bats. As explained in section C.14 assessment of the buildings suggests that they contain features used by roosting bats, therefore, the developer should commission a through bat survey prior to demolition commencing.