Bolton upon Dearne Railway Station.
Ecological Scoping Survey.

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1.0 Introduction

Ecoloserve Ltd. was commissioned by Corus Railway Infrastructure Services to carry out an ecological scoping survey at Bolton upon Dearne Railway Station and the immediate surrounding environment.

The purpose of the survey was to make an assessment of any ecological issues that may require attention in the event that a proposed development is to take place at the railway station.

2.0 Brief Site Description

The railway station at Bolton upon Dearne can be approached from Station Road and Lowfield Road onto the new housing estate at Manor Way. Grid Reference. SE 457 026.

The station is at the edge of the village of Bolton upon Dearne but new housing developments are being built in the immediate area of the station. There is still however extensive farmland to the east of the station. Some of the fields in this area have large field drains.

There is a car breakers yard about 200metres to the north of the station. The approach to the breakers yard is along the eastern perimeter of the station and this particular area has mature Hawthorne (*Crataegus monogyna*) hedgerow along the track.

Between the car park and Lowfield Road there is a triangular shaped area of semi-mature woodland containing species such as Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and polar (*Populus* spp.). It is intended that this woodland will be removed as part of the proposed development.

There is a bridge (Lowfield Road) over the railway lines at the southern edge of the station. The bridge looks to be a modern construction made of concrete and bricks.

A row of mature polar (*Populus* spp.) trees lie between the station platform and the access track to the breakers yard.

3.0 Methodology

Pre-existing information was not available on protected species during this survey. A Walkover Survey was carried out on 13th May 2008.

There was no access to the railway lines. However, the railway lines could be crossed at a level crossing at the station and all areas around the station could be seen. Under the road bridge could be viewed with binoculars while standing on the railway station platforms.

4.0 Results and Recommendations

4.01 Nesting Birds

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended, which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs.

Depending on the species, the bird breeding season can start in mid February and continue through until the end of August. During the survey Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) and Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) were heard singing from the triangular shaped area of woodland near the car park. A breeding bird survey is recommended if the development is to take place during the period of the bird breeding season.

4.02 Bats

In the United Kingdom all bats and their habitats are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended, and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007-S.I.2007/1843. It is an offence to damage or destroy any bat roost, intentionally or recklessly obstruct a bat roost, deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat or intentionally kill, injure or take any bat.

The structure of the bridge is made of concrete and brick and is well maintained. However, as part of the design of the bridge there are gaps within the bridge structure (refer to Appendix A, Photograph 1.). For this reason the bridge was assessed as having moderate potential for bats.
A bat survey is recommended.

Note.
A bat survey can be carried out at dusk from the railway station platforms.
Possession of the line or surveying from the lineside is not required.

4.03 Water Voles (*Arvicola terrestris*)

The water vole received limited legal protection in April 1998 through its inclusion in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for some offences. On the 6th April 2008 this protection was extended so the water vole is now fully protected under Section 9. Legal protection makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take (capture) a water vole. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which water voles use for shelter or protection or disturb water voles while they are using such a place.

There are large drains to the east of the railway station. But these are over 600m away from the station and considered to be too distant to be affected by the proposed works.

A water vole survey is NOT recommended.

4.04 Trees and Hedgerows

Between Lowfield Road and the railway station car park there is a triangular shaped area of semi-mature trees (refer to Appendix A, Photograph 2.). There is evidence in the wood that children use the site (refer to Appendix A, Photograph 3.). This will cause disturbance and deter some forms of wildlife occupying the site. Although the woodland contains breeding birds (see above section 4.01) the woodland has no other ecological value. If the trees have to be removed as part of the proposed development then the clearance should be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (mid February to end August), however, avoidance of unnecessary clearance would be the most appropriate measure to minimise the impact upon the local ecology.

5.0 References

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A) Photographs.

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Photograph 1.
Gaps within the bridge that may be suitable for roosting bats.



Photograph 2.
Triangular shaped woodland area containing semi-mature trees next to the car park.



Photograph 3.
There is evidence within the triangular shaped area of woodland that it is used by children playing. The picture shows bottles and other items littering the floor of the woodland.



Photograph 4.
Large mature poplar trees along the eastern side of the station.