

Habitat and biodiversity report

Development of railway servicing facilities at Baron Street, Bury

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On behalf of East Lancashire Railway

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1 Summary

- Construction of the carriage shed on the existing sidings will have minimal impact on biodiversity. No evidence of protected habitats or species was found although the adjacent listed 1856 Carriage Shed will almost certainly support bat roosts.
- The nearby pond and marshy grassland area that borders the school playing fields has some limited current wildlife value (including a stand of orchids). This will dry out and reduce further in value if no action is taken. However, it has potential to become a valuable wetland habitat and provide net biodiversity gain for the whole site.
- Japanese knotweed (an invasive non-native plant) is present in areas immediately adjacent to the development site. A strategy to control and prevent spread of this plant should be implemented before and during construction.
- A Tree Survey to BS5837 standards suggests that there are no trees on the development site that are worthy of retention. Some self-seeded trees could be retained along the boundaries to provide screening.
- It is very likely that bats will be using the listed Carriage Shed for roosting and possibly breeding for at least part of the year. It is recommended that a **bat survey from a specialist company is commissioned for the Carriage Shed.**

2 Introduction

This report has been prepared by Peter Black to accompany a planning application for development of the site at Baron Street as a servicing facility for the East Lancashire Railway. The author is a Chartered Town Planner (MRTPI), environmental manager and member of the Arboricultural Association with experience of over 25 years in planning, habitat surveys, environment, the rail industry and public transport. A site walkover survey was carried out on 25 June 2019. The weather was very wet.

The purpose of the survey was to assess the conservation value of the survey area, the likely presence of rare or protected species, to identify any features, habitats or species which would constitute potential constraints to development and recommend any mitigation or further survey work needed.

2.1 Site location and description

The site is at Baron Street, Bury. Grid Reference: SD 79940 10108. It is surrounded by residential and commercial properties, the Bury-Manchester Metrolink line and school playing fields.

The site is a large, flat area in previous and current railway use. There were no buildings within the survey area. The adjacent 1856 Carriage Shed (not surveyed) is a Grade II listed building. There are no other heritage or landscape designations, and no Tree Preservation Orders. The local development plan is the out of date 1997 Bury Unitary Development Plan. However, some policies are 'saved', and under these the site is allocated as an 'opportunity area' and for railway purposes. Some of the adjoining land is designated as a 'Wildlife Links and Corridor' (Policy EN6/4).

2.2 Proposed Development

It is proposed to build a new shed to store and maintain heritage railway items for use on the East Lancashire Railway, with ancillary development such as roads and landscaping. A replacement access track for Metrolink would be provided along the southern boundary

3 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The site was surveyed in accordance with JNCC (2010) to produce a Phase 1 habitat map, with target notes (TN) identifying important features or the potential for any protected or notable species. Species found are listed at appendix 2.

3.1 Habitats

The main habitats present are:

Hard standing, made ground and railway sidings

Most of the site has little or no vegetation. Some common annual ruderal species are present, including those associated with railways such as toadflax, evening primrose and weld (figure 4).

Scrub and scattered trees

Scattered trees border parts of the site and there is an area of young naturally regenerated woodland to the east which is not part of the development site. This area shows up as mostly grassland on a 1980 aerial image. Species include typical railway pioneers such as birch, oak, sycamore, ash and goat willow. Ground vegetation is dominated by nettles and other weeds, indicating a high nutrient status and low biodiversity value. There are scattered patches of Japanese Knotweed (figure 1).

Marsh/marshy grassland

Ground below the embankment on the northern Bury Grammar School field boundary (again not part of the development site) has impeded drainage and contains a shallow pond (figure 2) with typical plants such as Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) surrounded by Goat Willow scrub and marshy grassland including a swarm of about 100 spikes of marsh and common spotted orchids (figure 3) on the eastern edge. The area is heavily shaded and encroached on by tipping from the main carriage sidings site. Without management it is likely to gradually decline in wildlife value as over shading increases and the pond dries out.

The area along the northern boundary including the woodland and marsh has been identified by Bury Council as a possible 'wildlife corridor'.

2.2 Protected habitats and plant species

The site is dominated by made ground and no evidence of legally protected plant species or UK Biodiversity Plan (BAP) priority habitats [UK Biodiversity Plan \(BAP\) priority habitats](#) was found. The pond is overgrown and currently of limited wildlife value. It could be cleared and landscaped. This would ensure there was a net biodiversity gain as a result of the project. **It is recommended that:**

- **A management plan is created for the pond and adjacent woodland area.**

2.3 Protected animal species

No evidence of protected species (such as bats, voles, badgers and Great Crested Newts) was found.

Bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). No trees or structures likely to harbour bat roosts were found on the site.

It is very likely that bats will be using the listed Carriage Shed for roosting and possibly breeding for at least part of the year. They will probably be using the areas surrounding the site for foraging. It is an absolute criminal offence to disturb bats, and ignorance is not a defence. The vegetation on the rest of the site is not suitable for bat roosts, although part of the site may be used for hunting.

It is recommended that the Carriage Shed is surveyed for bats survey by a specialist company.

Badgers are frequently found in Greater Manchester. No setts or other signs were noted during the survey, although badgers are common in urban areas and they may occasionally access and forage within the woodland to the north of the site.

4 Other environmental Issues

4.1 Controlled weeds

Several clumps of Japanese Knotweed (figure 1) were noted near the pond in the northwest part of the site, and on the southern edge of the regenerating woodland to the east of the site. This plant does not set viable seed in the UK (male and female flowers are on separate plants and we only have the female version), but it is very easy to spread the underground stems (rhizomes) in soil on boots or machinery. Even tiny fragments will establish a new colony.

Section 14(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that 'if any person plants or otherwise causes to grow in the wild any plant which is included in Part 2 of Schedule 9, he shall be guilty of an offence'. Japanese knotweed is a Schedule 9 listed plant.

Material with Japanese Knotweed rhizomes is classed as 'controlled waste' and must be disposed of safely at a licensed landfill site according to the Environmental Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991. If dealt with on-site it must be buried to a depth of at least 5 metres.

It is recommended that:

- **Japanese Knotweed clumps are sprayed in Spring/Summer with Glyphosate (sold commercially as Roundup) to reduce its vigour. Usually 2 or 3 sprays over more than one year are needed to eliminate the plant.**
- **Works should avoid any areas with Japanese Knotweed. These should be securely fenced to avoid contractors inadvertently disturbing ground and spreading the rhizomes.**
- **An 'invasive non-native species protocol' is submitted with any planning application.**

4.2 Trees and woodland

A range of pioneer tree species (Goat and Grey Willow, Birch, Oak, Sycamore and Ash) are present on the fringes of the site, and in a block of regenerating woodland to the east. These were assessed in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - Recommendations' (BS5837). Trees are categorised into one of the four categories outlined in BS5837 to identify their quality and value and provide an indication of importance in relation to the site and the local landscape.

None of the trees around the site would score higher than Category C (Trees of low quality and value which might remain for a minimum of 10 years or young trees with stems of less than 150mm diameter. Trees with very limited conservation or other benefits).

All are relatively young, of limited wildlife value and unlikely to support any bat roosts. However collectively the trees to the north and western boundaries form a good landscape screen. These should be retained, and a management plan created to maximise their wildlife value. This could also help to involve schools bordering the site.

It is an offence to disturb nesting birds, so works should be programmed to avoid the bird nesting season (1 March and 31 August inclusive), although it may be possible to work between these dates if a survey of nesting birds has been carried out, and no nests are found.

It is recommended that:

- **Existing woodland is used as a landscape screen, and a Management plan created for the pond and adjacent woodland area.**
- **Works that could affect nesting birds between March and August should be avoided.**

4.3 Waste and recycling

The planning application will require a statement on how waste is to be handled and recycled. A previous report highlighted that waste and recycling performance is below comparable operations and left significant room for improvement. While this site visit did not specifically consider waste, it is obvious that there is some way still to go. **It is recommended that:**

- **An review of waste handling and disposal is undertaken to ensure the site is legally compliant.**
- **An environmental audit is carried out and an Environmental Management System created.**

4.4 Landscape

There is no statutory landscape designation on the site, but any works would affect the setting of the listed carriage sheds, and potentially impact on neighbours. Removal of scrub to provide a Metrolink access track will open the southwestern boundary, and there could be an effect on occupiers of the flats near the site entrance in Baron Street, although there is already a vegetation screen.

It would be sensible to retain the existing trees and scrub as landscaping. **It is recommended that:**

- **All vegetation adjacent to the flats in Baron Street is retained and protected during works.**
- **A strip of trees next to the Metrolink boundary to the southwest is retained when the new access track is constructed. This could be thickened by underplanting hawthorn, etc.**

4.5 Environmental Assessment

The development does not fall within the criteria that would require formal Environmental Impact Assessment under the EIA Regulations, although there is considerable flexibility for local planning authorities to call for an EIA if they feel it is needed. There is a formal process called 'Screening' to allow Bury MBC to make this decision. They may also ask for a 'Sustainability Appraisal' which is less formal, but would require much of the same information as an EIA.

It is recommended:

- **An environmental scoping document is created for discussion with Bury MBC.**

End of report appendix follows.

Appendix one – photos



Figure 1 Japanese Knotweed



Figure 2 Wetland area



Figure 4 Common spotted orchid - wetland area



Figure 3 Weld on carriage sidings

Appendix two - plants found on site 25 June 2019

Marsh Orchids

Common spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*)
Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*)
Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*)
Hawkweed sp (*Hieracium ssp*)
Weld (*Reseda luteola*)
Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*)
Sow-thistle (*sonchus oleraceous*)
Pineapple Weed
Knapweed
Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*)
Willowherbs (*Epilobium angustifolium, hirsutum, montanum*)
Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)
Great Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*)
Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)
Dock (*Rumex sp*)
Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*)
White Campion (*Silene alba*)
Pearlwort (*Sagina procumbens*)
Thistles (*Cirsium arvense and vulgare*)
St John's Wort (*Hypericum sp*)
Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*)
Male Fern (*Dryopteris felix-mas*)
Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)
Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)
Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)
Buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*)
Bramble
Rush (*Juncus effusus*)
Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*)

Common toadflax

Herb Robert (*Gernaium robertianum*)
Comfrey
Evening primrose (*Oenothera erythrosepala*)

Common shrubs (Broom, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder)

Range of common grasses

Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)