

Herefordshire Council

Hereford Station Transport Hub

Bird Survey Report

V01 | 17 August 2023



©Image taken by Arup staff on site (2023).

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) has been commissioned by Weston Williamson & Partners on behalf of Herefordshire Council to undertake a range of design and consultancy services, including environmental, to inform the proposed development of land at and around Hereford Train Station (henceforth referred to as the 'site'). This includes the production of an array of species survey reports, including for bird activity.

The site, located within an urban setting in Hereford city centre, comprises the forecourt area of Hereford Railway Station, car park area east of the forecourt and an additional parcel of brownfield land located to the west of the forecourt and to the north of the City Link Road, adjacent to the Widemarsh Brook. The total site area equates to 1.6 ha, with the site boundary shown in Figure 1.

The site is bounded by the Hereford City Link Road along its southern boundary. The Hereford Railway Station NCP car park and student accommodation is located immediately to the east whilst the railway line is to the north, Station Medical Centre abuts part of the western boundary of the site. The existing station forecourt is currently used for parking facilities in an informal arrangement for cars, taxis, and buses alike.

1.2 The Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises a series of improvements which would function as the forecourt of the existing Hereford Railway Station, providing safe and accessible access to the station. The key features of the proposed development would include the following:

- The creation of a Drive In Reverse Out (DIRO) bus interchange, with capacity for four bus spaces, on-street bus stops and an L-shaped external canopy shelter area, including restrooms and driver facilities;
- The provision of a bus layover space with a capacity for ten bus spaces;
- Provision of new passenger drop-off, taxi rank, accessible parking, short-stay parking, staff parking and cycle parking areas;
- The formation of a new access junction south-east of the Station Medical Centre; and
- Improvements to the public realm.

The development will be subject to a planning application under the Town and Countryside Planning Act 1990. The design proposals at the time of writing are shown in Figure 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Report¹.

1.3 Objectives of the Report

The objectives of this report are to:

- Present the methodology used and identify any limitations encountered during the 2023 breeding bird surveys;
- Summarise any historic bird survey results or records along with the results of the 2023 surveys for birds; and
- Describe the general assemblage of breeding birds using the site, including all species recorded.

¹ Arup. (2023). Hereford Station Transport Hub. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 4-50.

1.4 Legislation

All wild birds (defined as species which are resident or are visitors to the United Kingdom (UK), but generally not game birds) are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). As far as planning and development is concerned, it is an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird. Some species, listed in Schedule 1 of the Act, are protected by special provisions because of their rarity and it would constitute an offence to disturb them while nesting (which includes nest building). It is also an offence to disturb dependent young of a Schedule 1 bird.

In England, many of our rarest and most threatened species are listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Outcome 3 of the Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy contains an ambition to ensure that 'By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.' Protecting and enhancing England's Section 41 species is considered to be key to delivering this outcome.

1.4.1 Species of conservation concern

The majority of breeding, wintering and passage populations are assessed using data collected through the UK's bird monitoring schemes and measured against a set of objective criteria which leads to them being placed on the Red, Amber or Green Lists². The assessment does not simply look at the numbers of birds present, rather, it considers the trends in populations and consequently some species with comparatively small populations in the UK are on the Green List and some species present in large numbers are on the Red List. Although the lists confer no legal status in themselves, they are useful in evaluating the importance of bird species and assemblages.

The conservation status of birds in the UK is set out in Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) 5 in which birds are classified in three lists described as follows:

- Red List: species that are globally threatened, whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years, and those whose populations have declined historically and not exhibited any signs of recovery. Species that have experienced a population decline of >50%;
- Amber List: species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe, whose populations have declined moderately in recent years, including species that show a historical decline but whose populations have shown a substantial increase, species that are rare, with localised populations and those species of international importance with UK populations and species that have experienced a population decline or breeding range decline of 25% to 49%; and
- Green list: All regularly occurring species that do not qualify under any of the Red or Amber criteria are green listed. The Green list also includes those species listed as recovering from historical decline in the last review that have continued to recover and do not qualify under any of the other criteria.

² Stanbury A, Eaton MA, Aebischer NJ, Balmer D, Brown AF, Douse A, Lindley P, McCulloch N, Noble D. and Win I. (2021) The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds* 114, 723-747.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

A desk study was undertaken to identify any existing ecological information to the site and its surroundings, which included to identify records of birds within the study area and wider surrounds up to a distance of 2 km from site red line boundary. Biodiversity data was obtained from the Herefordshire Biodiversity Records Centre (HBRC) on 21st February 2023.

2.2 Field Survey

Breeding bird surveys (BBS) were conducted by suitably qualified and experienced ornithologists from Skopeo (the Ornithology Network). Prior to the completion of the surveys, a survey route was determined to provide coverage of all suitable areas within the site, defined as the survey area. The western extent of the site was considered the most suitable area for breeding birds, due to the presence of scrub, a brook and adjacent riparian habitat. The survey area was relatively small, and comprehensive coverage of all areas was achieved. The survey transect route is shown on Figure 1.

2.2.1 Common Bird Census (CBC) Survey

The survey methods were derived from current best practice as described in Bird Census Techniques³ and Bird Monitoring Methods⁴, and conform to the recommendations of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

Surveys consisted of walking a pre-defined transect route in all accessible habitat types at a slow pace, pausing briefly at intervals to listen for bird song and to scan for birds flying overhead or taking flight from the surrounding area. All birds seen and heard were mapped, paying particular attention to behaviour which indicates breeding (e.g. singing or carrying nesting material or food), in accordance with the BTO standard activity recording codes.

Surveys were undertaken on two occasions on 4th July and 11th July 2023, with a week between surveys. The weather on both days was overcast with a light breeze, ranging from 12°C to 16°C. The transect route was walked in the morning, between dawn and 10am, when levels of avian activity (particularly singing) are likely to be at their highest. Observations of birds outside the site were also logged when seen.

2.3 Limitations

The findings presented in this report represent those at the time of survey and reporting, and data collected from available sources. Ecological surveys can be limited by factors affecting the presence species, such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. The absence of bird species evidence or potential evidence from any location during the survey cannot be taken as conclusive proof that the species is not present or will not be present in the future.

Two survey visits in July (late in the breeding period) may not be sufficient to determine breeding status or identify territories, nor to provide a full list of the species which may be present. However, in the context of the site and proposed works, two visits is considered sufficient to characterise the assemblage present within the survey area, and to determine the likely potential impacts of the works.

Nevertheless, all surveys were conducted at the optimal survey periods and suitable weather conditions. Every effort has been made to ensure that the findings of the study present as accurate an interpretation as possible of the status of breeding birds within the study area.

³ Bibby, B. B. (2000). Bird Census Techniques. London: Academic Press.

⁴ Gilbert, G. G. (1998). Bird Monitoring Methods: A manual of techniques. Bedfordshire: RSPB.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

Over a thousand records of birds were returned by the data search within 2 km of the site. Of these, 133 records were of Schedule 1 species, including peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, redwing *Turdus iliacus*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, pintail *Anas acuta*, red kite *Milvus milvus*, little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius*, hobby *Flaco subbuteo*, greylag goose *Anser anser*, greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, and barn owl *Tyto alba*.

Species recorded during the initial site walkover (12th April 2023) include blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, sand martin *Riparia riparia*, herring gull *Larus argentatus*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and pied wagtail *Motacilla alba*. Habitats on site including dense scrub and woodland have potential to support breeding birds.

3.2 Field Survey

Table 1 provides a summary of all species logged during the surveys. The locations of all observations are shown on Figure 2. Within this figure, codes shown within circles indicate observations of singing birds (likely indicative of breeding) and the locations of potential nests. No other behaviours likely indicative of breeding (e.g. carrying food, nesting material etc.) were observed.

A total of 14 species were recorded during the surveys. Of these species, nine are included in the BoCC 5 Green List, 4 on the Amber List, and 1 on the Red List. Two species logged are also included within Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. No species included on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded.

Table 1. Survey results.

Species	BTO Code	Conservation Status	Notes
Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	LB	Amber	A total of 21 observations, mostly sited on the roofs on the surrounding buildings.
House sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	HS	Red, Section 41	A total of 6 observations. Two of these recorded as female and one male. Three recorded flying north into the survey area, and three flying south out of the area.
Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	WP	Amber	A total of five observations.
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	B	Green	A total of 5 observations. Two of these recorded as female and two male.
Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	CC	Green	A total of three observations, all indicating breeding (singing) and potential nesting areas.
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	D	Amber, Section 41	One observation.
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	BC	Green	A total of four observations, all indicating breeding (singing) and potential nesting areas.
Blue tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	BT	Green	A total of five observations, one count being a juvenile.
Great tit <i>Parus major</i>	GT	Green	Two observations.
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	R	Green	Two observations.

Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	WR	Amber	One observation.
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	GO	Green	Three observations, with one recorded flying north from survey area.
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelops</i>	CH	Green	Two observations, both recorded flying north through the survey area.
Grey heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	H	Green	One observation, recorded flying south/south-west through the survey area.

4. Conclusion

Breeding bird surveys undertaken to inform the proposed project were completed in July 2023. These surveys included a Common Bird Census-type walkover survey of a transect route, incorporating a stretch of the Widemarsh Brook. All species observed and heard were recorded during the surveys.

A total of 14 species were logged, and of these species; 9 are included in the BoCC 5 Green List, 4 on the Amber List, and 1 on the Red List. Two species logged were also included within Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Lesser black-backed gull was the most logged species, recorded on the roofs of the adjacent buildings. In general, the species recorded on site are a typical assemblage of breeding birds associated with the habitat on and adjacent to site.

It should also be noted that this breeding bird survey did not include specific searches for species that are typically crepuscular or nocturnal, notably owls. Barn owl, a Schedule 1 species on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and have been recorded within 2 km of the site. Nevertheless, no suitable nesting locations have been identified for barn owl on site. Consideration should be given to barn owl should any trees be subsequently identified as potentially suitable (such as following storm damage).

Due to the species noted singing during the survey (chiffchaff and black cap) and the suitable habitat within and adjacent to the site for birds, it is likely that birds may be nesting within proximity to the site and proposed works, thus may be subject to disturbance.

The habitat to be cleared by the development is likely to be of small-scale, however it is recommended that all vegetation clearance is to be undertaken outside the main nesting bird season (March to August inclusive). If vegetation clearance is required during the nesting bird season, a check by a suitability qualified ecologist should be undertaken prior to the commencement of any clearance works and be extended to adjacent suitable habitat along the brook. If any nests are found a suitable buffer to safeguard the nest should be instructed.

This report is the result of survey work undertaken in July 2023 and refers, within the limitations stated, to the condition or proposed works of the site at the time of the surveys. A full assessment of the impacts of the works to the local bird assemblages will be detailed within the Ecological Impact Assessment for the project.

Figure 1. Breeding Bird Survey Area

- Red Line Boundary
- Bird Survey Transect



Coordinate System: British National Grid
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Distribution: Aerial OS



Rev	Date	By	Chkd	Appd	Authd
01	04/07/2023	CH	NM	PC	

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Client
Herefordshire Council

Project Name
Hereford Station Transport Hub

Drawing Title
Breeding Bird Survey Area and Site Boundary

Scale at A3
1:1,750
Notes

Subsidiary
S4
Project Number
287750-00
Drawing Number
01

Figure 1

Figure 2. Breeding Bird Survey Results



Coordinate System: British National Grid
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Subsidiary
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Figure 2