



Water Vole Report

Land at Chidswell, Dewsbury

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Summary Statement

No evidence of water vole activity has been found within any of the on-site, or neighbouring, watercourses or ditches. The likely absence of this species can therefore be reasonably concluded.

Introduction

1. Subsequent to recommendations set out in the WYG, December 2016, Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report (Ref. A054074), Brooks Ecological Ltd were commissioned to carry out a dedicated Water Vole Survey of all suitable features within the proposed development Site in Chidswell.
2. The survey was required to provide information on the likelihood of impacts on water vole arising from proposals to develop the site.
3. Survey encompassed three separate sections of watercourse, one of which passes through the northern half of the Site (west-east) and two further sections located just outside of the red line boundary to the south; see Figure 1.

Figure 1 Site boundary (red line) and approximate extent of survey (dark blue line)



Legal background

4. Water voles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 5 (as amended April 2008) in respect to Section 9 which makes it an offence to:
 - intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection;
 - intentionally or recklessly disturb water voles whilst occupying a structure or place used for that purpose;
 - intentionally kill, injure or take water voles;
 - possess or control live or dead water voles or derivatives;
 - sell water voles or offer or expose for sale or transport for sale;
 - publish or cause to be published any advertisement which conveys the buying or selling of water voles.
5. Water voles occupy a variety of water's edge habitats but can also be found away from water in some regions of the UK. Their places of shelter are normally found within 2m of the water's edge and comprise a series of connected burrows with both above water and under water entrances.

Method

6. The survey was carried out from the banks of the ditch/ watercourse system, and where safe to do so, from within the channel itself.
7. An early season visit was carried out on the 20th April 2018, with a late season visit on 6th September 2018. Both were undertaken in suitable weather conditions and led by an experienced field worker. Survey encompassed an area up to 10m in land from either side of each ditch.
8. Water vole survey followed Dean et al. (2016) and attempted to locate evidence of water vole including:
 - *Sightings of water vole*
 - *Water vole tunnel entrances*
 - *Water vole "lawns"*
 - *Water vole feeding stations*
 - *Water vole latrines*
 - *Waterside paths*
 - *Water vole footprints*

Habitat Description

9. The Site is separated into a number of large arable fields by a mix of hedgerows, ditches/ watercourse and simple post & wire fence lines. All of the ditches/ watercourses surveyed are at the upper reaches of tributaries that eventually join and discharge into the River Calder. All support an ephemeral/ intermittent flow, and present fairly sub-optimal water vole habitat.
10. Each of the three-watercourse surveyed change in character as they progress steadily eastwards. The most southerly begins as a small (c.0.2m) wide channel, surrounded by small, shallow banks vegetated by rank grass and tall competitive herbs. This then transitioned to a steep valley woodland to the east.
11. The central ditch is around 0.5m wide, and starts off within a small wooded valley, before continuing along the edge of Dogloitch Wood. For the most part, the banks are vegetated with woodland ground flora and understorey.
12. The on-site watercourse has the most natural profile and fluctuates between having sections of steep wooded bank, and flat banks vegetated with rough grassland and tall ruderal.

Figure 2a Southern drain (off-site). View of the west (left) and east (right) ends.





Figure 2b

Central drain (off-site). Passing along the edge of Dogloitch Wood

Figure 2c On-site watercourse



Results

13. No evidence of water vole activity was found along any of the onsite or offsite watercourses or drainage ditches during the course of the two survey visits.

Conclusions & Recommendations

14. No evidence of water vole activity has been found within any of the watercourses surveyed and the risk of this species being found on Site is considered to be negligible.
15. No further survey or precaution is therefore recommended with regards to water vole and proposals present little risk of impacting on this species.

References:

Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016). The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook. The Mammal Society

Strachan *et al.*, (2011). Water Vole Conservation Handbook.