

Riparian Mammal

Westwood Mills, Linthwaite

Westwood Wilson Ltd.

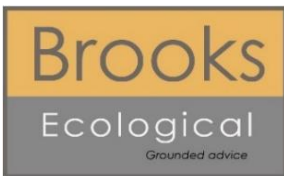
Report Reference: R-3976-01

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Report Reference:	R-3976-01
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Summary Statement

Development of the Site presents minimal risk of impacting on otter and water vole.

Standard precautions are recommended in regard to avoiding indirect impacts upon the watercourses during construction works.

Introduction

1. Subsequent to the recommendations made in Brooks Ecological's Updating Ecological Appraisal (report reference P-3976-01, August 2019), Brooks Ecological was commissioned to carry out detailed Otter and Water vole survey¹ of a section of the River Colne which passes adjacent to Westwood Mills, Westwood Lane, Linthwaite (SE 094 145).
2. Survey was required to provide information on the likelihood of impacts on these two species, arising from proposals to develop the Site.

Figure 1 Extent of walked survey (blue line) and the Site boundary (red line)



Records

3. Two records of water vole have been returned which relate to Slaithwaite Reservoir c.1.7km west. This reservoir is hydrologically unconnected to the Site.
4. No records of otter have been returned.

¹This Report has been prepared in October 2019 following visits to the site in September – October 2019 and our findings are based on the conditions of the site that were reasonably visible and accessible at that date. We accept no liability for any areas that were covered, unexposed or not reasonably visible or accessible, nor for any subsequent alteration, variation or deviation from the site conditions which affect the conclusions set out in this report.

Legal background

Otter

5. Otters are afforded full protection under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) plus amendments, and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
6. Under these Acts it is an offence, among others, to:
 - capture, kill, disturb or injure otters (on purpose or by not taking enough care)
 - damage or destroy a breeding or resting place -an otter holt or couch- (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
 - obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
 - possess, sell, control or transport live or dead otters, or parts of otters
7. Otters are territorial animals with ranges of up to 35km depending upon habitat quality. They frequent a wide range of sheltering places mostly close to water and occupy them at varying times of the year.

Water vole

8. 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.
9. 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.

Habitat

- 10. As it passes through this part of Kirklees, the River Colne flows west to east alongside the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, before meeting the River Calder c.7 miles downstream of the Site.
- 11. As it passes the Site's southern boundary, the channel varies between 4-6m wide, with a maximum depth of 75cm and mean depth of 30cm. The River's bed consists of sandstone cobbles and pebbles, with the occasional large boulder exposed.
- 12. The banks of the river here vary. In parts, shallow, wide silt margins are present- to the east these are largely bare due to heavy shading from mature trees, whilst further west, the banks are colonised by an array of tall ruderal and scrub species, including Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed. These margins are noted to be prone to flooding. In other sections, the banks are identified by 1m high masonry revetments or by 2m high concrete retaining walls.

Figure 2(a-d) Typical views of the channel including culvert



Methodology

- 13. On the 25th September, a walked survey of the River Colne was carried out. This survey was conducted from along the northern bank of the river, and where safe to do so, from within the channel itself. Survey encompassed the full length of the River Colne as it borders the Site.
- 14. A camera trap was used to monitor a culvert identified during the initial walk-over survey. This was deployed on the 1st – 16th October 2019.

Field Evidence

- 15. No evidence of either water vole or otter activity was noted along this section of the River Colne.
- 16. Silt bars along the banks and exposed boulders offered good opportunities for retention of evidence of both species, but despite this, none was found.
- 17. A culvert which enters the watercourse through the northern bank was identified as being a potential feature for otter holting. A two-week period of camera monitoring of this feature recorded no evidence of otter with brown rat, common shrew and field mouse being the only mammal species recorded.



Figure 3

Brown rat recorded using culvert

Evaluation

18. Despite a thorough survey of this section of the River Colne, no evidence of water vole or otter was found.
19. Otters will be expected to make use of the River Colne, both as a foraging resource and for dispersal, but there no evidence to suggest that this species is currently using the Site for holting or couching.

Conclusions & Recommendations

20. The likely absence of water vole has been reasonably concluded and otter do not appear to make use of the Site resting. The proposed development is therefore unlikely to impact directly on these two protected species or contravene the legislation protecting them.
21. However, otters are likely to use the river for hunting and travel, and suitable precaution must be put in place to ensure that development does not lead to indirect impacts on this species, and other wildlife that rely upon it. To that end, the following recommendations are provided:
 - A green standoff should be designed into the proposals, buffering the banks of the River Colne from the development footprint.
 - A sensitive lighting strategy should be produced to minimise light spill on the River Colne.
 - Pedestrian access to the river should be restricted
 - A scheme to protect the river from construction activities should be produced; this would be best detailed in the Site's Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), provided by the project's main contractor. This would include a chapter on biodiversity with specific input from an ecologist and would set out (amongst other issues) the protection of watercourses.

References

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