



Taylor Wimpey

Henthorn Road, Clitheroe

PROTECTED SPECIES REPORT

10th October 2012

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared / Date	Approved/Date
-	Draft 1	KLB / 10.10.12	KEH / 19.10.12
	Final	KLB / 13.11.12	

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been produced by FPCR Environment & Design on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, to provide an assessment of any potential constraints from the presence of protected species on an area of land at Clitheroe, Lancashire. The surveys were carried out in order to discharge conditions 14 to 17 of the Planning Inspectorates Appeal Decision reference APP/T2350/A/11/2161186, namely that before any development is to take place surveys for the following protected species should be undertaken:
- Otter *Lutra lutra*
 - Water vole *Arvicola amphibius*
 - White clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*
 - Badger *Meles meles*
- 1.2 As part of the original planning application an initial Ecological Assessment (FPCR, November 2010) was produced detailing the results of protected species surveys undertaken during that year.. This concluded that there was no evidence of the presence of the above protected species on site but that habitats were favourable for their habitation.
- 1.3 The application site occupies land to the south west of Clitheroe with residential areas to the east, a caravan and camping site to the west and farmland to the north and south. The River Ribble runs to the west of the site and comprises part of its western boundary
- 1.4 Proposals for development of the application site include the construction of residential properties with associated green infrastructure. In order to maximise potential benefits for biodiversity the proposals also include a habitat creation and management plan for the site including the watercourse, areas of species rich grassland, hedgerows and enhancement of part of the River Ribble. This plan is a requirement under condition 20 of the Appeal Decision.
- 1.5 The habitat on the site consists of improved and semi-improved grassland divided into fields by hedgerows. A partially culverted stream runs through one field. This watercourse provides potential habitat for protected species such as water vole and white-clawed crayfish, whilst the site in general provides potential habitat for badgers. The River Ribble provides potential habitat for water vole and otter.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Otter

- 2.1 The River Ribble was surveyed for otters on the 4th October 2012 by searching for characteristic field signs such as
- Spraints – distinct faeces deposited on particular features such as boulders and tree bases
 - Prints – identifiable prints on soft margins of the water course
 - Slides or haul-outs – established entry and exit routes in and out of the water
 - Potential holt sites – including under roots of bank side trees or in large rock piles

Water vole

- 2.2 Surveys were undertaken on October 4th 2012 using the standard methodologies of Strachan *et al.* (2006). This involved identification of evidence of activity including:
- Latrine sites – distinct piles of water vole droppings found near nest sites, at the ranges of territorial boundaries and where the animals enter and leave the water.
 - Feeding stations – areas with distinct neat piles of chewed lengths of vegetation along pathways or haul out platforms along the water's edge.
 - Burrows – burrow entrances are typically wider than high with a diameter between 4-8cm. Generally these burrow entrance are located at the water's edge.
 - Lawns – short grazed areas at the entrances to burrows.
 - Prints – identifiable prints in soft margins of the watercourse.
 - Runways – low tunnels that are pushed through the vegetation and often lead to burrows or feeding stations.

White clawed crayfish

- 2.3 The survey was carried out by a licensed ecologist (Natural England Licence No. 20121974) on the 4th October 2012 using the methodology outlined in *Monitoring the White-clawed Crayfish Peay (2003)*. The survey comprised a manual search of suitable refuge patches along the on site stream and along the (approx.) 30m stretch of the stream off site. Survey methods comprised of:
- Manually searching under suitably large cobbles, boulders and woody debris on the stream bed.
 - Sweep netting under overhanging banks and in submerged vegetation
 - Night viewing the stream bed by using the beam of a torch.

Badger

- 2.4 A badger survey was conducted on the 4th October 2012. Signs which may indicate the presence of badgers include:
- Setts (main, annexe, subsidiary and outlier)

- Latrines
 - Prints and track-ways
 - Hairs caught on rough wood and fencing
 - Snuffle holes, scratching posts and general feeding activity
- 2.5 Evidence of such activity was sought by systematically searching along all hedgerows within the site
- 2.6 The identification of snuffle holes, scratching posts or feeding signs on their own does not necessarily provide conclusive evidence of the presence of badgers and a number of such signs need to be seen in conjunction before they can be said to be conclusive of badger activity.

Limitations to Survey

- 2.7 Conditions for the otter and water vole surveys on the River Ribble were sub-optimal as they were carried out after a prolonged period of heavy rainfall resulting in a high flow and inundation of the banks.

3.0 RESULTS

Otter

- 3.1 No evidence was found that indicated the presence of otter along the stretch of the River Ribble that runs adjacent to the site. No evidence was recorded on the stream running through the site.

Water vole

- 3.2 The stream on site was considered unlikely to be utilised by water vole due to its shallow nature (less than 300mm in depth), over shading by bank side vegetation and the lack of marginal and aquatic food plants within its channel. No field signs of this species were recorded during this survey.
- 3.3 The River Ribble and its bank provided optimal habitat for water voles. The stretch of bank adjacent to the site was surveyed. Three small burrows were recorded within the bank side but no further evidence of potential use by water voles was observed and evidence of brown rat *Rattus norvegicus* habitation (faeces) was found along the stretch of bank side adjacent to the site boundary.

White clawed crayfish

- 3.4 The survey area comprised an 80m stretch of the watercourse running from a culvert within one of the fields on site to and beyond the site boundary. In-stream dimensions were similar throughout the survey area with a width of approximately 1-2 metres and a depth of between 10cm and 30cm. Suitable refuges within the bank sides were limited with only localised undercutting. These potential refuge areas were checked by sweep netting. Refugia within the channel was also limited and therefore all were searched by hand along the 80m stretch. Cobbles of varying sizes (6.5cm – 25.6cm) made up the vast majority of refugia. A night survey

was also undertaken but no crayfish were observed by torchlight. Siltation was low along the whole stretch of the watercourse. Large areas of the stream bank were vegetated by hawthorn trees and scrub so much of the water course was over shaded.

- 3.5 Despite the presence of suitable habitat within the watercourse no white-clawed crayfish were observed during the manual search of this particular stretch.

Badger

- 3.6 The grassland habitats within the site and adjacent land provided potential habitat for foraging badgers. However, no evidence of use by this species was recorded within the site or along the site boundary. Mammal tracks were noted along and leading through the hedgerows but no substantiating evidence was found to suggest that these were produced by badgers.

4.0 EVALUATION

- 4.1 The River Ribble and associated bank side habitats, which lie adjacent to the site boundary, offered optimal foraging and commuting habitat for otters. No potential place of shelter was identified during the survey and no evidence of use by this species was recorded.
- 4.2 No evidence of water voles was found within the site boundary. The watercourse running from the culvert onsite to fields beyond the site boundary was considered sub-optimal for water voles due to over shading and a lack of marginal and aquatic plants which could offer foraging resources. The riverbank adjacent to the site offers optimal habitat for water voles and several small burrows were found in the bank side. No further field signs were found to confirm these as water vole burrows, but there was evidence that they may be being used by brown rat.
- 4.3 No white-clawed crayfish were observed during the survey of the stream either on or adjacent to the site
- 4.4 Despite the site providing potential habitat for foraging no evidence of badger activity was recorded within or immediately adjacent to the site boundary
- 4.5 There was no evidence that the four species in question are present on or around site, or on the River Ribble adjacent to it, therefore there are no constraints to the proposed development in relation to these species.
- 4.6 Condition 20 of the Appeal Decision requires the submission of a habitat creation/enhancement and management plan and programme. This will be submitted in a separate document and will include a detailed nature conservation management plan to help improve the site to encourage its use by the protected species in question and to ensure that the optimal benefits for biodiversity are achieved.

5.0 SUMMARY

- 5.1 Surveys have been carried out in order to discharge conditions 14 to 17 of the Appeal Decision.
- 5.2 No evidence of the presence of the species covered by these conditions was found on site or on land adjacent to the site boundary.
- 5.3 A management plan to enhance the site for its utilisation by these species is to be written in order to help discharge condition 20 of the Appeal Decision.