

Land at Station Road (The Secret Lake) Nelstrop
Rd N, Levenshulme, Stockport M19 3WH.
Riparian Mammal Survey.

Version One. 03.11.2025
Prepared for: The Northern Group

NAME OF SITE:	Land at Station Road (The Secret Lake) Nelstrop Rd N, Levenshulme, Stockport M19 3WH.
PROJECT No:	12596
CLIENT NAME:	The Northern Group
SPECIALIST:	Amenity Tree Care Ltd
DATE PREPARED:	03.11.2025
PREPARED BY:	Ryan Whitmarsh
REVIEWED BY:	Simon Brain
DATE REVIEWED:	04.11.2025
VERSION CONTROL:	Version 1

1.1	Introduction	
1.1	Site Description Location and Context	3
1.2	Purpose, aims and objectives	4
2.	Methods	4-5
2.1	Summary of survey methods	4
2.2	Surveyor information	5
3.	Results	5-6
3.1	Summary results	5-6
4.	Recommendations and mitigation	6-7
4.1	Recommendations	6
4.2	Mitigation measures and mitigation licenses	7

Appendix

1.0 Introduction

Site description, location, context, and development proposal

- 1.1 Amenity Tree Care was commissioned by The Northern Group to undertake a Riparian Mammal Survey on “Land at Station Road”, Levenshulme, Stockport.

Figure 1 Aerial view of the site, with boundary of affected areas.



Note. National Grid Reference: SJ 88752 94634

- 1.2 The survey area consists of Bramble Scrub (h3d), native hedgerow, non-native hedgerow (h2b), Sparsely Vegetated Land (S) Other standing water (r1g). Mixed scrub (h3h), other standing water (r1g) developed land buildings and sealed surfaces (u1b), other woodland (mixed) / other broadleaf woodland and urban trees (w1h, w1h5) and other neutral grassland (g3c). The area subject to survey was a culverted ditch habitat that was situated just north of the main lake/reservoir.
- 1.3 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal that was produced on the 28th April 2025 stated the following

“A culvert fed by an overflow from the western lake is located to the northwestern corner of site which is densely populated by bramble and scrub. Open areas of water

were located to the northeastern corner of the western lake, and to the western boundary of the eastern lake which are subject to seasonal variation with aerial imagery indicating these areas are subject to significant periods of time as dry ditches. No running watercourses apart from the overflow were located elsewhere on site”.

- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to provide an appropriately water vole survey / otter to inform the planning application in respect of the potential presence of these species and any mitigation that should apply as a result of the survey findings.
- 1.5 Water voles (*Arvicola amphibious*) and their habitat are provided full legal protection under Schedule 5 (section 9) of the WCA 1981 (as amended), which makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take Water voles and to damage, disturb or destroy their ‘place of shelter’
- 1.6 Otters are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is illegal to intentionally kill, injure, or disturb otters, and to damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places (holts), even if they are not in use. The Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) is listed as globally threatened on the IUCN Red data list and is protected by national and international legislation such as:
 - Annex II and IV of EC Habitats Directive 92/43
 - The Wild Mammals Protection Bill 1996
 - Schedule 5 (sections 9.1 & 9.4) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended in 2000 by Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).
 - Schedule 2 Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 Summary of survey methods
- 2.2 Water voles occupy the banks and margins of a wide range of aquatic habitat types, including ponds, field drains, reservoirs, wetlands and rivers.

The survey was conducted in accord with the Water Vole Conservation Handbook (Strachen 2006) and entailed walking upstream, within the water channel, and searching the margins and banks for field signs, comprising any combination of the following:

- a) Burrows and boltholes in the banks, with diameters of 4 - 8cm.
- b) Footprints in any mud

- c) Cylindrical, blunt-ended droppings deposited in 'latrines' to mark range boundaries or favoured spots close to burrows.
- d) Chewed (angular) lengths of vegetation, possibly deposited in feeding stations
- e) Trampled runways.
- f) Occasionally above-ground nests of finely shredded vegetation.
- g) Feeding 'lawns' around burrow entrances (typically most evident mid-late in the breeding season).

2.3 Surveyor information.

Ryan Whitmarsh is an experienced ecologist and has attained a *BSc (Hons)*. He has attended courses for bats and BNG (FSc) and has experience in a range of ecological surveys including Breeding Bird Appraisals. Ryan is also a qualifying member of CIEEM and holds a Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC) at level 3.

3.0 Results

Summary

- 3.1 No evidence of water vole was found. Small mammal burrows were recorded along the bankside of the ditch, but these were non-diagnostic of water vole. There was frequent foraging evidence that appeared to be from other rodents (i.e., mice or shrew); none that was cut at a 45-degree angle which is typical of water vole. Water quality in the ditch is good, but it was heavily shaded by woodland canopies.

The culverted ditch was approximately 20-30m in length and has a maximum depth of 60mm; it also feeds into the main lake. Suitable perennial vegetation is present including, False oat grass, Yorkshire fog, Annual meadow grass, Hard rush, Pendulous sedge, Rosebay willowherb, Common nettle and Cock's foot; although it is densely vegetated so it may lack water during the summer months.

The banks of the watercourse had steep banks that were suitable for burrowing, but the site was subject to high levels of antisocial behaviour (ASB), these levels of disturbance will likely deter water vole from using the ditch. The watercourse was accessible, and it was possible to walk through it for the survey.

Overall, the ditch habitat was considered of low suitability for water vole species. Other habitats onsite were considered unsuitable for other UK protected mammal species. Water voles are likely absent from site at the time of survey.

Additionally, no evidence of Otter has been found during the detailed walkover and no further surveys for this species are considered necessary as the species is likely to be absent from site and therefore development will not cause any harm to the species.





4.0 Recommendations and mitigation

There is no evidence of water vole or otter on this site and therefore no further actions are necessary to mitigate for the presence of this species within this development. The ditch habitat is also retained through the development.

However, the improvement of the habitat to encourage the species to be present is recommended as part of development and as part of general biodiversity enhancements.

This can be achieved by the following means:

Additional shelter for wildlife could be introduced by transplanting localised clumps of yellow iris into the stream margins and by introducing localised patches of a native wetland plants for example a seed mix and / or plugs containing species such as Meadowsweet (*Fillipendula ulmaria*), Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Greater bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and Water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*). Hand weeding of the existing tall ruderal plants to include the removal of Willowherb and Bramble is required. The pruning back of overhanging woodland trees would also be beneficial to the biodiversity near the stream edge.

4.1 Mitigation measures and mitigation licenses

The surveys have shown that the species are absent from site and therefore no mitigation measures or Natural England licensing are required for works.