

15th March 2024

Sally Riley
Redrow Homes Ltd
Central Payments
Redrow Homes Lancashire
Redrow House
St David's Park
Ewloe
Flintshire
CH5 3RX

Dear Ms Riley,

RE: Water Vole Survey, Land at Stakehill

A water vole survey was undertaken on 14th October 2022 at the ditch (D1) within the site Land at Stakehill (hereafter referred to as the site) by Lizzie Atkinson MSc Qual CIEEM (two years' experience in undertaking water vole surveys) and assisted by Evie Berry BSc. The water vole survey was undertaken during suitable weather conditions (dry, sunny (2/8), calm air (Force 0 on the Beaufort Scale) and 14°C).

An updated water vole survey was carried out on 13th March 2024 at ditches D1, D2, D3, D4, D5 and D6 by Lizzie Atkinson (four years' experience in undertaking water vole surveys) and Liz Kenyon BSc (Hons) (over seven years' experience in undertaking water vole surveys). The water vole survey was undertaken during suitable weather conditions (dry at the start of the survey with light rain towards the end, overcast (8/8), calm air (Force 0 on the Beaufort Scale) and 10°C). The surveys were carried out in accordance with the Water Vole Conservation Handbook (3rd+ ed).

Ditch D1 that will be impacted by the first phase of the proposals, within the full planning application was surveyed by walking within accessible sections of the ditch. Approximately 5m of the central section of the ditch could not be accessed due to dense vegetation and steep banks. The banks along the remaining sections of the ditch could be easily searched for signs of use by water vole. Limitations with access to the banks in a section of approximately 5m have been taken into account in the conclusions of this report.

Ditch D2 will be impacted within the full planning application to accommodate a new access road, the ditch was dry at the time of the site walkover in March 2024 and therefore unsuitable for water vole and do not require further consideration. Ditches D3 and D6 were also dry at the time of the site walkover in March 2024, therefore are unsuitable for water vole and do not require further consideration. Ditches D4 and D5 were inspected, however are heavily shaded and holding water <10cm deep, therefore are also considered unsuitable for water vole and do not require further consideration.

Water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) are a Species of Principal Importance and also fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) 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; and
- publish or cause to be published any advertisement which conveys the buying or selling of water voles.

In October 2022, water vole footprints were identified at OS grid reference SD 887 091. No other evidence of water vole or burrows was recorded throughout the section of the ditch surveyed. A weasel was identified in the scrub habitat north of the ditch during the survey.

In March 2024, potential water vole footprints were identified at SD 88766 0917 and a single burrow was identified at SD 88718 09082. No other signs such as droppings or feeding remains were recorded in ditch D1.

Ditch D1 will be impacted within the masterplan for phase one of the works, within the full planning application. These works would cause disruption to any water vole that may be using the ditch D1. Due to evidence of water vole within the ditch, an updated water vole survey immediately prior to the start of works will be required. A toolbox talk is also recommended for all construction workers prior to the start of works for water vole or if in the event the species is found. Ecological supervision will be required during works to ditch D1 following the outcome of the water vole check prior to the works commencing. As evidence of water vole has been identified during water vole surveys in 2022 and 2024, it is recommended that a water vole mitigation strategy is produced and implemented that identifies appropriate mitigation measures to avoid harm and enhance the site further for water vole.

If the ditch (D1) is to be retained at a later stage, all works within 5m of the ditch would still require an updated water vole survey and ecological supervision also be required for any works adjacent to the ditch (D1).

In the event that water vole are encountered during the proposed works, all works should stop, and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for advice.

Yours sincerely,



Lizzie Atkinson
Ascerta