

Ecological Assessments

Environmental Statements (Biodiversity)

Species Surveys

Phase I Habitat Survey

National Vegetation Classification

Planning Guidance

Habitat Regulation Assessment

Protected Species Licensing

42020 CEMP: Biodiversity

BREEAM LE01 - 05

Water Vole Survey Report



Omega Zone 8

St Helens, WA5 3UG



Consultant Report on behalf of:

REPORT STATUS

Issue/revision	Issue 1: DRAFT TO CLIENT	Issue 2: FINAL	Issue 3: AMENDED FINAL
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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	BACKGROUND	4
1.2	LOCATION.....	4
1.3	PROPOSALS	4
1.4	SITE DESCRIPTION.....	4
1.5	WATER VOLE LEGISLATION	5
2	METHODS	7
2.1	METHODS OF SURVEY	7
3	RESULTS	9
3.1	WATER VOLE SURVEYS.....	9

FIGURES

Figure 1	Location.....	6
Figure 2	Water Vole Survey	8

TABLES

Table 1.	Water vole survey results.....	9
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1. The following report has been prepared on behalf of Omega Warrington Ltd and provides the results of water vole surveys undertaken at Omega Zone 8, St Helens ('The Site').

1.2 LOCATION

- 1.2.1 The Site forms part of the Omega business estate located west of Warrington, falling just within St Helens Borough. It is immediately south of the M62, west of Junction 8, and immediately west of the Warrington District County boundary and Lingley Mere.

1.3 PROPOSALS

- 1.3.1 This is a hybrid application for full and outline planning permission:

Hybrid Planning Application

- i. Full Planning Permission for the erection of a B8 warehouse, with ancillary offices, associated parking, infrastructure, and landscaping; and
- ii. Outline Planning Permission for Manufacturing (B2) and Logistics (B8) development with ancillary offices and associated car parking, landscaping and infrastructure (detailed matters of appearance; layout and scale are reserved for subsequent approval)

1.4 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.4.1 The Site (~75.5 ha) is dominated by arable land with woodland belts, a network of ponds and ditches improved grassland and scrub habitat present. A brook runs through the centre of the Site from the northwest and adjoins to the southern boundary. Off-site woodland is present to the south and west of the Site and a woodland belt forms the eastern boundary.

1.5 WATER VOLE LEGISLATION

1.5.1 Water voles are protected under Section 9, Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended 2008). The legislation makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture) a water vole;
- possess or control a live or dead water vole, or any part of a water vole;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or
- place which water voles use for shelter or protection or disturb water voles while
- they are using such a place;
- sell, offer for sale or advertise for live or dead water voles.

Figure 1

Location

Omega Zone 8, St Helens

Legend

- Development Site
- Site Location



Drawing No.: 16903-1BBS_A

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2 METHODS

2.1 METHODS OF SURVEY

- 2.1.1 A water vole surveys were carried out throughout the site during May through June 2019, in accordance with Dean et al. 2016¹. This included inspection of accessible sections of ditch and pond areas to check for field signs of water voles (Figure 2).
- 2.1.2 Typical water vole field signs include droppings, latrines (piles of droppings), feeding remains/feeding stations (piles of short sections of distinctively cut vegetation), burrows, lawns (short grazed vegetation outside burrows), footprints and pathways at the water's edge created by regular trampling.
- 2.1.3 The recommended extent of survey for water vole activity in relation to bankside disturbance where works will permanently affect 15-50m of ditch/bankside habitat is 100-200m upstream and downstream the proposed area of works (Dean et. al. 2016¹). As water vole presence has not been previously identified at the site, estimates of latrine density were made from recording field signs every 10m.




¹ **Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. 2016.** The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. Mammal Society, London.

Figure 2

Water Vole Survey

Omega Zone 8, St Helens

Legend

-  Site Boundary
-  Ditches Surveyed
-  Ponds Surveyed



Drawing No.: 16903-01WVS_A

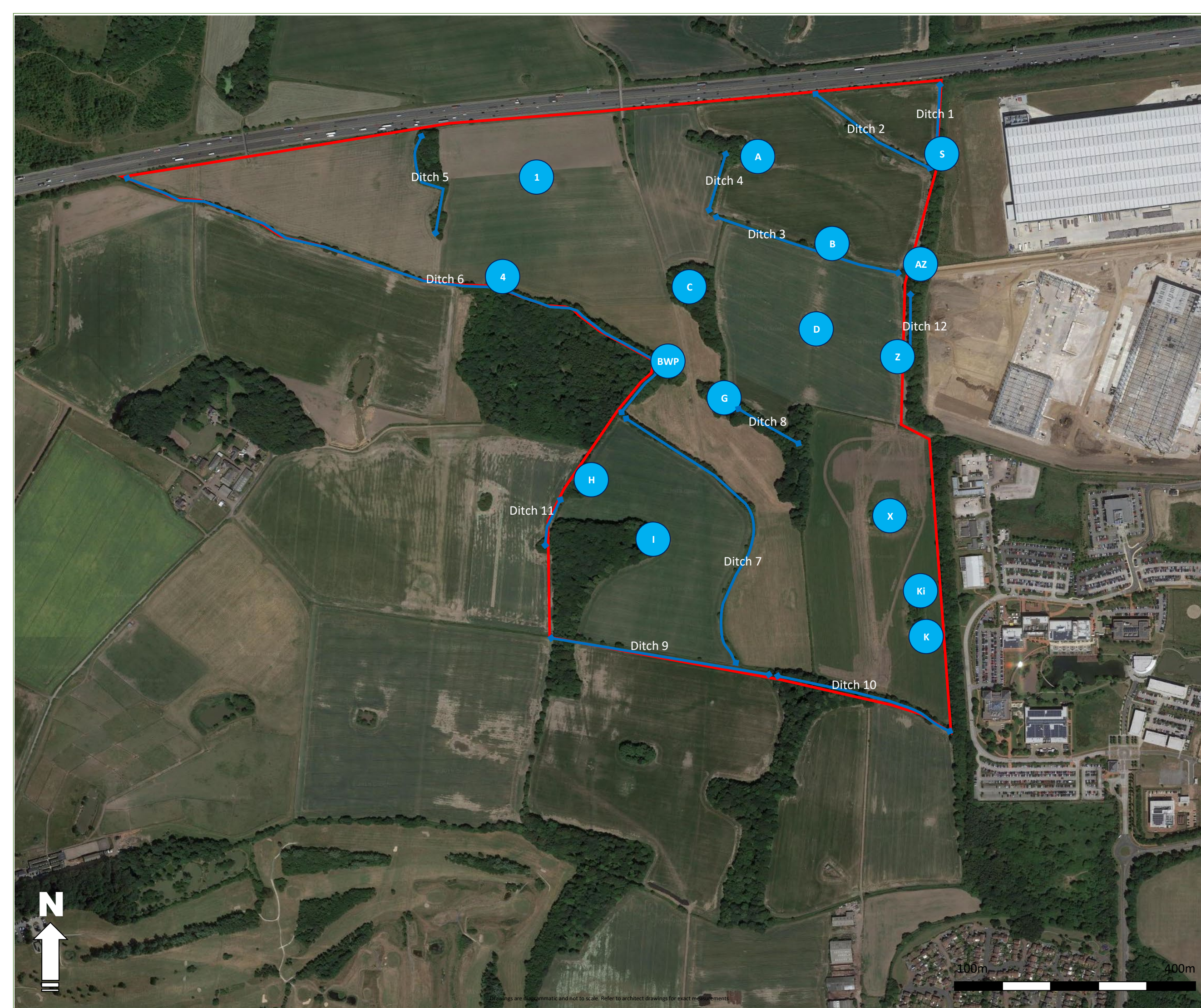
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3 RESULTS

3.1 WATER VOLE SURVEYS

3.1.1 No water voles were recorded during field surveys at the site, results are found in Table 1.

Table 1. Water vole survey results

SECTION	Field Sign	Plant species in feeding remains / Comments
Pond 1	None	(no access granted due to crops). Previous notes indicated lack of ground vegetation around pond. Alder and oak trees present at banks, a small area of rushes located on south eastern bank. Otherwise poor suitability
Pond 4	None	Alder, ash surrounding pond. Grey willow and sycamore within pond. Himalayan balsam present. Limited burrowing opportunity and limited food plants present. Poor suitability.
Pond A	None	Shallow – flat earth banks. Some rushes and grasses present although generally sparse. Quite poor suitability overall, although better in isolated places. No field signs observed.
Pond B	Rat droppings / burrow	Shallow earth banks with limited ground flora/food plants present. Vegetation present at bank tops. Rat droppings and burrow near pond edge.
Pond C	None	Poor suitability owing to overshadowing and very limited ground flora/food plant opportunity
Pond D	None	Inaccessible due to crop in field. Pond is isolated.
Pond G	None	Poor suitability owing to overshadowing and very limited ground flora/food plant opportunity, with grasses locally present.
Pond H	None	Poor suitability owing to overshadowing and limited ground flora/food plant opportunity. Some rushes present on eastern bank. No mammal signs observed. Earth banks steep to west and near flat to east.
Pond I	None	Shallow – flat earth banks. Heavy overshadowing by trees. No suitable food plants present.
Pond K	None	Moderately-steep earth banks to east, flat ground to west. Dense soft rush on eastern bank, some rushes on west bank.
Pond Ki	Rat droppings	Some shallow-moderate earth banks. Flat banks to south. Improved grassland at bank tops. Rat droppings noted within grain dropped by farmer on southern bank.
Pond S	None	Shallow to flat earth banks. Some limited grassland at tops of eastern bank, although generally heavily shaded by trees. Generally poor suitability
Pond X	Likely rat burrows	Flat ground surrounding pond. Heavy use by mallards and some Canada geese. Fox kills and eaten eggs near to pond within grass. Poor suitability for water vole. Likely rat burrows noted near pedunculate oak, although water has altered shape of burrows making them larger.
Pond Z	None	Heavily overshadowed with no ground flora/food plants present. Shallow – flat earth banks.
Pond AZ	None	Shallow – moderate earth banks. Some limited grasses present but generally poor suitability. No
Pond BWP	None	Heavily shaded and limited ground flora/food plants present. Shallow – moderate earth banks. Hemlock water-dropwort at western bank, rhododendron along eastern and south banks. Poor suitability.
Ditch 1	None	Dominated by reed canary grass

SECTION	Field Sign	Plant species in feeding remains / Comments
Ditch 2	Field/Bank vole feeding remains	Shallow -moderate steep earth banks. Grassland verge at banks tops providing suitable food plants including; yorkshire fog, nettle, red campion, cleavers, broad leaved dock, bindweed and reed canary grass. Himalayan balsam present along northern extent. Suitable habitat but no evidence of water vole presence. Field/bank vole feeding remains.
Ditch 3	Field/Bank vole feeding remains and droppings	Dominated by grasses including perennial ryegrass, false-oat grass, yorkshire fog, barren brome and reed canary grass. Cleavers, fox gloves, rosebay willowherb. Field/bank vole feeding remains and droppings along northern extent.
Ditch 4	None	Ditch was dry and overshadowed throughout with very no ground flora/food plants present. Poor suitability.
Ditch 5	None	Light flow of water running north to south. Ditch is overshadowed throughout with very limited ground flora/food plants present. Poor suitability. Locally abundant hemlock water-dropwort noted within depression. No mammal signs.
Ditch 6	None	Northern extent of Whittle Brook. Steep earth banks along northern extent before Booth's Wood, up to 2m high. Generally well vegetated with suitable grasses. No mammal signs observed. Himalayan balsam noted as occasional. Water depth to 100cm in places, with riffles and shallower water present at times.
Ditch 7	None	Moderate earth banks throughout this section of Whittle Brook. Well vegetated, although mostly bramble/scrub habitat with locally abundant areas of suitable vegetation. Himalayan balsam locally abundant to northern section of ditch. No evidence of mammals. Water depth up to 60cm in places. Riffles present at northern extent of ditch under tree canopy.
Ditch 8	None	Ditch was dry and overshadowed throughout with very no ground flora/food plants present. Poor suitability.
Ditch 9	Field/Bank vole droppings and feeding remains	Most suitable area of water vole habitat on site. Highly vegetated ditch, with tall grasses and variety of potential food plants. Some areas of very dense scrub present. Banks up to 1.5m high. Shallow water ~5cm present throughout, although choked by reed canary grass in areas. Field/bank vole droppings and feeding remains present along ditch.
Ditch 10	None	Moderate – steep earth banks. Largely overshadowed by trees within limited ground flora/feeding remains. Grasses at bank tops. Banks up to 2m high and water depth up to ~90cm in places. Largely pebbles and riffles present.
Ditch 11	None	Steep ditch with ~5cm water present. No flow. Banks up to 2m high and show signs of previous mechanical damage. Bank highly shaded with little ground flora/food plants present. Bank tops well vegetated. No signs of mammals.
Ditch 12	None	Ditch was dry and overshadowed throughout Poor suitability.

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