

Discharge of Condition 18

OTTER SURVEY

Application Number: P/2016/02552

CULMINGTON FARM

For Walnut Renovation and Development Ltd

30 March 2021

Arbor Vitae Environment Ltd

Lower Betton Farm

Cross Houses

Shrewsbury

SY5 6JD

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1. Introduction

Planning consent has been granted for the conversion and extension of a redundant agricultural building to form two residential dwellings, construction of two detached garages, installation of sewerage treatment plant, at Culmington Farm.

The Planning Consent includes three Conditions relating to ecology. Condition 29 states:

Within 90 days prior to the commencement of any development, an inspection of the section of river within the vicinity of the flood alleviation works shall be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist and the outcome reported in writing to the Local Planning Authority. If new evidence is recorded of otters during the pre-commencement survey then the ecologist shall submit a mitigation strategy which sets out appropriate actions to be taken during the works.

This report summarises the results of the specified survey.

2. Site description and background

Culmington Farm lies within the centre of the small village of Culmington and includes a range of traditional barns adjacent to the public road and extensive modern agricultural buildings, some of which have been recently removed. The River Corve flows along the eastern side of the farmstead. A modern access bridge crosses the river and leads from the farmstead to the agricultural fields to the east. The river is largely tree lines although some alders have been coppiced in recent years in the vicinity of the farm buildings. One large and notable native black poplar tree, a rare species, lies in a small paddock between the buildings and the river.

Proposals for the site include the conversion of two traditional buildings into residential properties, the demolition of a series of portal-frame buildings and Dutch barns and the construction of seven new houses on the site of the former buildings.

An ecological appraisal of the site was carried out by Turnstone Ecology in 2016. This led to Phase 2 surveys of bats being carried out in 2017.

The appraisal carried out detailed surveys of otters, amongst other species, and found evidence in the form of spraints (otter droppings) beneath the bridge. Otters are regularly recorded on the River Corve.

3. Survey methodology

The site was surveyed by W Prestwood, an experienced and qualified ecologist, on 26th March 2021.

The banks of the river were inspected in each direction for a distance of approximately 150 metres. Evidence of presence of otters and use of the river by otters was searched for. Signs of otter presence include spraints, footprints, slides and paths, evidence of feeding, holts and resting places.

4. Survey results

Both banks of the river are well lined with trees, largely alder, other than for a short stretch of approximately 50 metres from the site in each direction where the banks are either clear of trees or where mature trees have been coppiced. Small grass fields about the river in the vicinity of the farmstead but for most of the stretch surveyed, arable land forms the riparian land use.

No evidence of otter use or activity was found on the banks of the river. High winter water levels meant that no mud was exposed on the banks and therefore there was no likelihood of footprints being found.

The area beneath the bridge was checked for otter spraints but no signs were found. Again, high winter water levels could have removed evidence.

5. Summary

The survey did not find evidence of otters using the river. The length of river immediately adjacent to the site does not provide features which otters could utilise such as holts of lying-up areas and is relatively exposed in comparison to other sections of the river.

It is very unlikely that the proposed development will have any impact on otter populations. Proposals for flood alleviation measures on land to the east of the river provides an opportunity to enhance the habitat for otters.

Mitigation for otters is included within the Construction Environment Management Plan.

FIGURE 1 WILDLIFE PROTECTION ZONE

