



Water Vole Survey Report

The Former Lawford Boarding Kennels

Greensbridge Lane, Tarbock Green, Merseyside

L35 1QH

Client: Mr John Morgan

August 2025

Quality Assurance

The information which the author has prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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Summary

A Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) survey was commissioned by Mr John Morgan of a section of Netherley Brook associated with the former Lawford Boarding Kennels, Greensbridge lane, Tarbock Green, Merseyside. The survey was commissioned following a request by the LPA for a Water Vole survey of Netherley Brook to support a planning application for the re-development of the site.

The survey was commissioned to assess for the presence/absence of Water Vole in association with the brook, in the vicinity of the proposed development, and inform any requirement for mitigation measures in relation to the works.

There are two records of Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) within 2 km of the site within the last 10 years. These date from 2018 and are located 250m north of the site and associated with Netherley Brook. The citation for Netherley Brook and Netherley Woods and Brook (KLWSs) indicates that breeding Water Vole are recorded in association with the brook. There is no habitat within the site suitable for supporting Water Vole, but Netherley Brook is immediately adjacent to the site, and is known support this species (records 250m north of the site).

No field signs confirming the presence of Water Vole were observed in association with the surveyed length of the brooks throughout the survey.

Overall, it is considered that despite the records of Water Vole in association with the water course approximately 250m north of the site, the combination of heavy shading, dense scrub, invasive species and tall ruderal vegetation, along with proximity to dog walking areas to the south/west and other human activity, likely limits the potential of this section of the watercourse to support Water Vole at this time. Grasses and other suitable food plants were also limited along the banks primarily due to the extents of Himalayan Balsam and heavy shading.

It is understood that in relation to the development an 8m stand-off/buffer from the top of the banks of the watercourse is proposed to be maintained (see Masterplan Layout drawing 2.010 – C). This will be sufficient to avoid any direct disturbance to the banks of the watercourse and any offences in relation to Water Vole being committed (should they be present at any time).

In the event any outfall works are required in association with the development, in the absence of any confirmed evidence of the presence of Water Vole burrows, it is recommended that the recommended precautionary working measures are adopted as part of the works.

1. INTRODUCTION

A Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) survey was commissioned by Mr John Morgan of the a section of Netherley Brook associated with the former Lawford Boarding Kennels, Greensbridge lane, Tarbock Green, Merseyside. The survey was commissioned following a request by the Local Planning Authority for a Water Vole survey of Netherley Brook to support a planning application for the re-development of the site.

The survey was commissioned to assess for the presence/absence of Water Vole in association with the brook, in the vicinity of the proposed development, and inform any requirement for mitigation measures in relation to the works.

1.1. Site Description

The site is located in Tarbock Green, Liverpool, Merseyside (Grid Reference: OS 345633, 386569) The site comprises a small piece of land that is bordered by Greensbridge Lane to the east and Netherley Brook to the west. There is an urban area less than 100m to the west of the site consisting mainly of urban residential properties. The east of the site consists of agricultural grassland and a small mixed woodland.



Figure 1. Site and surrounding landscape character.

1.2. Proposed Development

The proposed development is for the demolition of the existing buildings, clearance of the site and construction of residential buildings and associated car-parking areas, infrastructure with soft-landscaping. It is understood that an 8m buffer between the proposed development site and the watercourse has been designed into the site to minimise any impact on the watercourse and associated riparian habitats.

2. LEGISLATION & STATUS

Water Voles are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a priority conservation species. It is illegal to:

- Intentionally capture, kill or injure Water Voles.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or block access to their places of shelter or protection.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb Water Voles in their places of shelter or protection.
- Possess, sell, control or transport live or dead Water Voles or parts of them (not Water Voles bred in captivity).

In the event of an offence taking place, the maximum penalties are an unlimited fine and up to 6 months imprisonment.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Personnel & Quality Assurance

Rob Nicholson BSc (Hons) MCIEEM is a Class 2 Bat licence holder and Great Crested Newt Licence holder (Natural England), has over 15 years' relevant experience as an ecologist and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Rob has also been 'named ecologist' on numerous European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) in both England and Wales.

All field work and assessment was undertaken in accordance with current best practice guidelines (CIEEM, 2021) and survey guidance (Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016). The field surveys were undertaken in June and July 2025 and were informed by a preliminary habitat assessment survey undertaken in March 2025.

The report has been prepared in accordance with guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM 2017) and the British Standard 42020:2013.

3.2. Scope of the Assessment

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Determine presence/absence of Water Voles along the watercourse adjacent to the area of works.
- Determine whether future proposed works on the site could affect Water Voles.
- Inform any need for further survey.
- Inform any requirement for mitigation measures and form the basis of a licence application to Natural England if required.
- No consultations have taken place in relation to determining the scope of the assessment.

3.3. Desk Study

A data request to the Local Records Centre (LRC) for the area (Merseyside) was made, by the client, for records of Water Vole within 2 km of the site.

Other organisations in the county that may hold relevant ecological data were not consulted.

It is important to note that most species are greatly under-recorded and therefore a lack of records for a location should not be taken as an absence of the species concerned. Furthermore, a historical record for a habitat or species does not necessarily confirm its current presence.

3.4. Field Survey

Inspections of both banks of the watercourse, to a distance of 50m either side of the main proposed areas of development was surveyed as far as practicably and safely possible, broadly in line with the guidelines set out in the Water Vole survey guidelines (Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016). During each survey visit, a thorough search for field evidence was carried out from within the water course where the watercourse was safely accessible and along the upper banks where vegetation cover allowed.

The survey followed standard methodology as outlined in the 'Water Vole Conservation Handbook' (Strachan et al. 2011). The methodology included:

- Recording information on physical features of the waterbodies such as the bank profile, depth, width and flow.
- Collating general habitat information such as the dominant vegetation types.

- Searching for Water Vole signs such as sightings, latrines, burrows, feeding remains, tracks, and cropped grass at tunnel entrances and also noting potential impacts that may have an adverse effect on the species.

During the inspection, dense vegetation along the banks was pulled aside to facilitate examination of the earth hidden underneath for the presence of signs such as burrows and runs. Bankside surveys were conducted to search for evidence such as feeding remains, latrines, burrows and nests.

4. CONSTRAINTS

Although Water Voles do not hibernate, they demonstrate greatly reduced activity between October and April (Strachan et al. 2011), as such surveys were undertaken in June and July where activity is most likely to be recorded.

Surveys for Water Vole rely on signs of activity such as latrines, feeding stations and runs, none of which are likely to be found over the winter and as such the surveys being undertaken in June and July provided optimal chances of such field signs being evident.

The weather conditions on the days of the surveys were dry and sunny, following a period of dry conditions. As such, it is considered that the conditions in the weeks leading up to the survey visits were favourable, increasing the chances that Water Vole would have been active if present, leaving field evidence such as droppings, footprints and feeding remains, with no periods of high flow that could potentially wash away field evidence or reduce activity.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Designated Sites

Non-statutory sites

Netherley Brook and Ditton Brook Corridor is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and is the subject of this survey.

Water Vole records

There are two records of Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) within 2 km of the site within the last 10 years. These date from 2018 and are located 250m north of the site and associated with Netherley Brook. The citation for Netherley Brook and Netherley Woods and Brook (KLWSs) indicates that breeding Water Vole are recorded in association with the brook.

There is no habitat within the site itself suitable for supporting Water Vole, but Netherley Brook is immediately adjacent to the site, and is known support this species (records 250m north of the site).

5.2. Field Survey

The banks of the watercourse were very heavily vegetated at the time of survey in June and then in July, predominantly with tall ruderal species such as Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Greater Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Hemlock Water-Dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), scrub including Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) which dominated in places. Trees including mature poplar (*Populus* spp.) willow (*Salix* spp.) shade the water course almost the entirety of the section of watercourse associated with the site.

The watercourse itself meanders along its length with a width of approximately 2.5m – 4m on average. The water depth varied between approximately 20cm and around 1m (at the times of survey). The substrate is largely sedimentary with sand and clay evident. There, are occasional small mud/silt islands containing grasses, H.balsam and Common Reed (*Phragmites* sp.). Debris and litter are common. Water clarity is poor in most places with visibility though the water severely limited, with a number of outfalls discharging into the brook.

During the June survey undertaken on the 30th June 2025, the watercourse was surveyed from the banks (both sides), inspecting the water side banks and the upper banks amongst vegetation as far as practicably possible. No mammal burrows were observed that could be

attributed to Water Vole. In addition, no Water Vole prints, feeding stations or latrines were identified on mud banks or amongst bankside vegetation. It was noted that the majority of the water course was heavily shaded and dominated by Himalayan Balsam.

A second survey was undertaken on 10th July 2025 via a combination of kayak and wading in the watercourse itself for a different survey perspective.

During the survey, no mammal burrows that could be attributed to Water Vole or other field signs were identified. A small number of superficial features which did not extend into the bank were present but no field evidence to confirm the presence of Water Vole in proximity to the site was recorded.

Overall, it is considered that despite the records of Water Vole in association with the water course approximately 250m north of the site, the combination of heavy shading, dense scrub, invasive species and tall ruderal vegetation, along with proximity to dog walking areas to the south/west and human activity, likely limits the potential of this section of the watercourse to support Water Vole at this time. Grasses and other suitable food plants were also limited along the banks primarily due to the extents of Himalayan Balsam.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION, FURTHER SURVEY AND ENHANCEMENT

It is understood that in relation to the development an 8m stand-off/buffer from the top of the banks of the watercourse is proposed to be maintained (see Masterplan Layout drawing 2.010 – C). This will be sufficient to avoid any direct disturbance to the banks of the watercourse and any offences in relation to Water Vole being committed (should they be present at any time).

As a precautionary working measure and best practice, in the event any outfall works are required in association with the development it is recommended that the following precautionary working measures are adopted as part of the works:

- An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) should be present for preliminary works (e.g. de-veg works and setting out).
- De-vegetation (acting also as a habitat dissuasion exercise) works should be undertaken during the winter months and under the supervision of the ECoW. This timing is due to no evidence of Water Vole being present currently and therefore to limit the risk of Water Vole moving into the areas of proposed works in the next active season or passing through the area of works and risking being harmed (Water Vole do not hibernate but are much less active during the winter months so less likely to move into an area at this time).
- De-vegetation works should be undertaken in a localised fashion, to minimise disturbance to riparian habitat (note: Himalayan Balsam is also present and avoidance measures in relation to the avoidance of spread of this species should be established prior to works commencing).
- De-vegetation works should be undertaken in a two stage strim. The first cut should be to around ankle height to facilitate further inspection for burrows in the specific locations of works, especially around the bank tops. This will also serve to check for any changes in the present / absence of burrows in the interim period between completion of the surveys and commencement of the works. The second cut can then be made once the ECoW has confirmed that no Water Vole burrow or other ecological constraints are present in association with the immediate area of works.
- Ground works can then commence in the de-vegetated area. Note: the de-veg area following the above protocol should include a buffer of 5m around the proposed area of excavation work.

- It is recommended that works are completed prior to the more active season for Water Vole (taken to be April onward) and when vegetation is low.

The above recommendations are made on the basis that no Water Vole burrows have been identified in proximity to the areas of proposed development but that they have been recorded historically 250m north of the site, on this water course.

By managing vegetation during the less active period for Water Vole, this reduces the chances of Water Vole being present during the works, where these are required (given that they are a mobile species) and provides precautionary approach that facilitates further inspection for burrows at the point of works commencing.

In the event a Water Vole burrow is discovered at any stage and disturbance cannot be reasonably avoided, works will need to cease and an appropriate mitigation strategy must be devised to avoid committing an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and protect Water Vole from disturbance and / or harm.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In view of the results of the desk and field-based assessment of the site, no further survey is required at this stage but in the event any works affecting the banks of the watercourse are required in relation to the development, precautionary working methods described in this report should be adopted in full for the works to proceed in line with UK legislation.

8. REFERENCES

BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Technical Guidance Series. www.cieem.net.

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

SRN Consulting (2025) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Former Lawford Boarding Kennels, Greensbridge lane, Tarbock Green, Merseyside

Strachan, R, Moorhouse T & Gelling (2011). Water Vole Conservation Handbook. 3rd Edition. WCru University of Oxford.

APPENDIX 1 SITE LOCATION PLAN



Image courtesy of Ordnance Survey accessed via Bing Maps ©Microsoft 2025

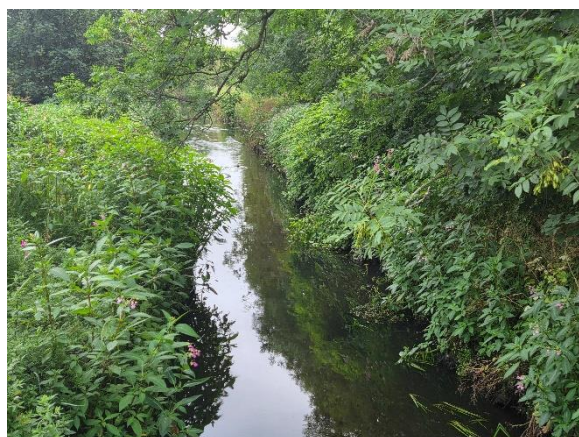
APPENDIX 2: SITE PHOTOS



Heavily shaded banks to the northern point adjacent to the site with man-made banks



Bankside vegetation looking south from the bank adjacent to the western edge of the site. Significant shading and H.Balsam present.



View up stream from site. Further north (away from site) the bankside vegetation opens up with less trees and shade.



Example of shading bank H.Balsam coverage.



Example shallow section of stream with mudbanks and pools present. Deadfall across width of watercourse. Heavy shading and H.balsam presence. No field signs in mud banks or bankside.



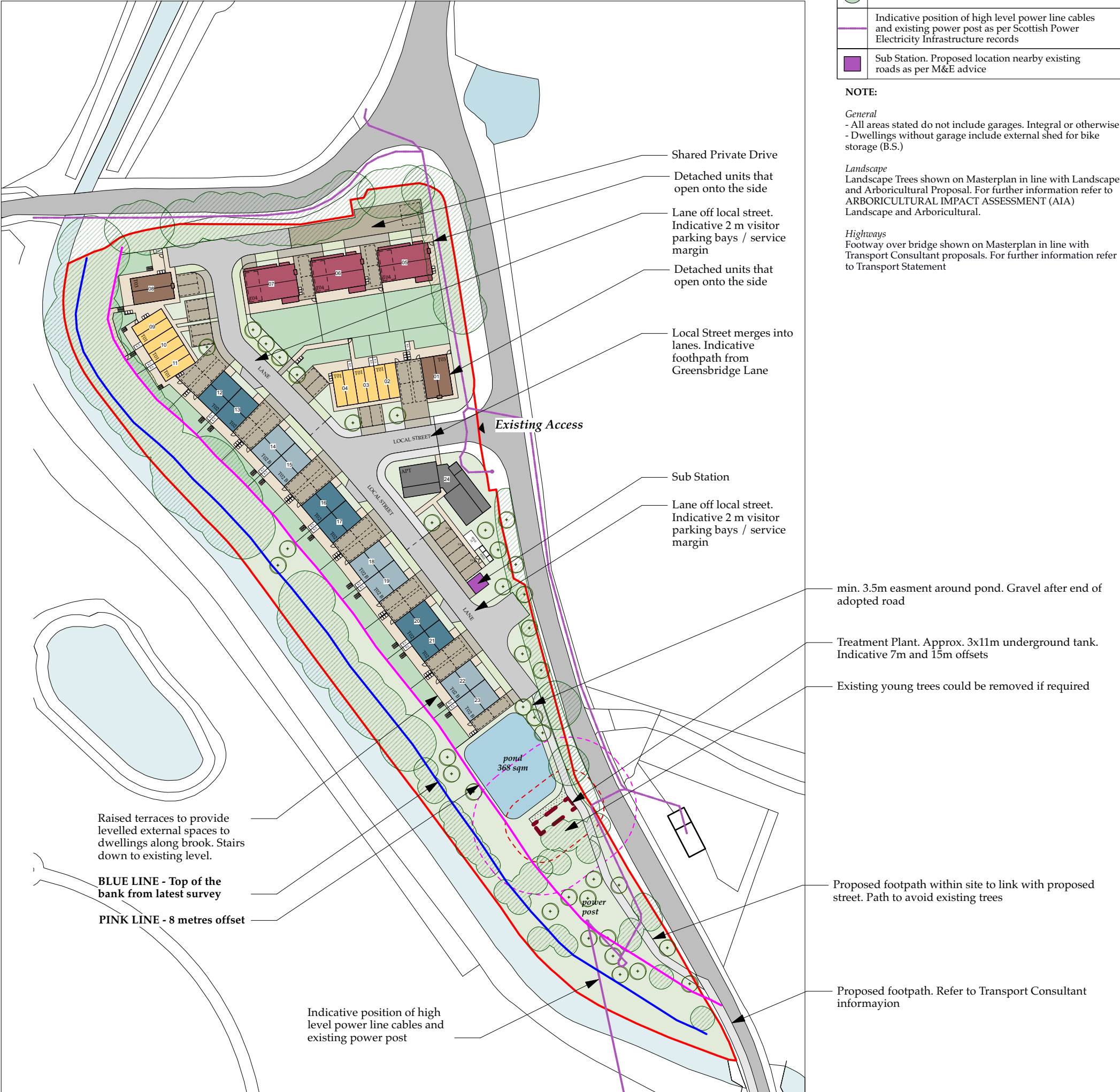
Section of watercourse beyond the site to the east opening up into Ditton Brook. Less shade with increase in aquatic plants and water clarity. No field evidence or burrows to banksides.

APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT MASTERPLAN

MASTERPLAN

RESIDENTIAL UNITS:						
Type	Description	Bedrooms	People	GIFA		NO.
T01	 Terrace	2	3	c. 70.2 sqm	c. 755 sq ft	6
T02 A	 Semi Detached	3	5	c. 93 sqm	c. 1001 sq ft	6
T02 B	 Semi Detached	3	5	c. 93 sqm	c. 1001 sq ft	6
T03	 Detached	3	6	c. 106 sqm	c. 1001 sq ft	2
T04	 Detached	5	8	c. 147 sqm	c. 1582 sq ft	3
APT	 Apartment	1	2	c. 53.2 sqm	c. 573 sq ft	6
TOTAL						29

Note: All areas stated do not include garages. Integral or otherwise



C	10/06/2025	AK	LC	Footpath and gates added
Rev.	Date	Drawn	Checked	Note



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Masterplan Layout