



**Mouchel Property**

# **Liverpool Playing Fields, Simpsons Ground**

Water Vole Survey Report

856405

**AUGUST 2016**

**RSK**

## RSK GENERAL NOTES

**Project No.:** 856405

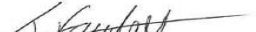

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**Client:** Mouchel Property


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<b>Author</b>	<u>Thomas Fawley</u>	<b>Technical reviewer</b>	<u>Victoria Gilbey</u>
			
Signature		Signature	
Date:	<u>04/08/2016</u>	Date:	<u>05/08/2016</u>

**Project Manager** Jason Ashworth

Signature: 

Date: 04/08/2016

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Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

This work has been undertaken in accordance with the quality management system of RSK Environment.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. This report provides details of a Water Vole survey completed at Simpson's Ground, Liverpool in August 2016 in connection with the proposed installation of new drainage at the site.
2. One ditch was identified on the site. Habitat assessments and searching for evidence of Water Vole was carried out through methods adapted from Dean *et al.* (2016).
3. The ditch is located in the woodland to the west of the site. At the time of the survey it was found to be completely dry and deemed unsuitable for Water Voles.
4. No further action is required in regards to Water Voles.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Purpose of this Report

This report presents the results of Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) surveys carried out by RSK Environment in connection with the proposed installation of new drainage at the Simpsons Ground playing fields in Woolton, Liverpool. The site is centred at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (SJ420 857). *Figure 1* shows the location of the site including the site boundary (red line).

RSK surveyors identified habitat suitable for Water Vole during initial ecological surveys undertaken in October 2015. Following this, further surveys were carried out to determine if Water Voles are present within the site boundary.

## 1.2 Ecological Context

The site is a recreation ground in the south of Liverpool. It is predominantly amenity grassland used as playing fields but also includes car parking, changing room facilities and – on the boundary - tall ruderal vegetation and trees. It is bordered to the north by an area of rough grassland, to the east by Hillfoot Road, to the south by a cemetery, and to the west by woodland.

The surrounding area is predominantly made up of green open space including woodland, park land and cemeteries. Beyond are small commercial and residential properties in the Woolton area of south Liverpool

## 1.3 Structure of this Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- *Section 2* describes the survey methods;
- *Section 3* describes the results;
- *Section 4* gives evaluations and conclusions;
- *Section 5* gives figures and plates; and
- *Section 6* gives references.

## 2 METHODS

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### 2.1 General

Lizi Langston and Jason Ashworth carried out the Water Vole survey on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016. Both are employees of RSK and have experience of carrying out Water Vole surveys.

### 2.2 Field Survey – Water Vole

#### 2.2.1 Habitat Assessment

Habitat was assessed for Water Voles according to subjective criteria, which were then used to categorise habitat according to suitability for the species. The following habitat factors are taken into consideration:

- water quality;
- water-level regime;
- channel dimensions;
- bank type and material;
- vegetation for cover and food sources;
- shading;
- predation and competition; and
- habitat management.

Habitat suitability was classified as follows:

- Suitable – habitat that has all the elements required for Water Voles certainly in the summer, and probably through most winters.
- Suitable (Sub-optimal) – habitat that has some of the habitat features that are suitable for Water Vole, but with some constraints so that suitability throughout the year is not certain.
- Unsuitable – habitat lacking one or more crucial element for use by Water Voles. This category does not necessarily preclude the habitat being used by commuting Water Voles, but it would not be able to support a resident population.

#### 2.2.2 Evidence of Water Vole Activity

Survey for evidence of Water Vole followed standard methods adapted from Dean *et al.* (2016). All suitable habitat was systematically and thoroughly searched for signs of the species where access was possible.

Surveys involved an intensive search of the bank side and water-edge habitat, searching for Water Vole field signs including:

- burrows;
- feeding platforms and evidence of feeding;
- food remains;
- latrines; and
- footprints.

In most cases, Water Vole surveys should be undertaken over at least two separate visits, two months apart, to account for variations in habitat suitability across the season. However, due to the unsuitability of the habitat, one survey was deemed to be acceptable.

## **2.3 Survey Constraints**

The survey data is valid for a maximum of two years (*i.e.* until August 2018). If more than two years elapses prior to commencement of the development it would be advisable to conduct further Water Vole surveys to ensure up-to-date information.

### 3 RESULTS

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The single ditch on the site is located within woodland to the west of the site. This was found to be completely dry with no aquatic or bankside vegetation and no suitable features were found for Water Voles.

For this reason only one Water Vole survey, out of the two that is recommended in the guidance, was deemed necessary.

## 4 EVALUATION

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No further action is currently required with regards to Water Voles.

## 5 FIGURES

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**Figure 1**

Liverpool Playing Fields – Simpson's Ground  
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## 6 REFERENCES

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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.

RSK (2015) Simpsons Ground – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (856405).

## APPENDIX A - LEGISLATION

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### Water Vole

Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) is fully protected under *Section 9 of Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). Protection was extended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Under this legislation, it is 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 to intentionally or recklessly disturb Water Voles while they are using such a place; or
- sell, offer for sale or advertise for live or dead Water Voles.

The Water Vole is included as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP).