**From:** Peter Shepherd [mailto:p.shepherd@bsg-ecology.com]
**Sent:** 05 July 2016 10:27
**To:** Watkins@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
**Cc:** chris.goddard@dp9.co.uk; Matthew Coyne; jwhite@ValueRetail.com
**Subject:** Otter surevy of the Pingle Brook

Dear Charlotte

I left a message on your voicemail yesterday and said I would follow up with this email. I undertook an otter and water vole survey on the 15th of April along the whole length of the Pingle Brook but with a particular focus on the existing bridge and the proposed location of the footbridge. I attach various photographs.

I searched the water course banks 50 metres up and down stream of the proposed footbridge location and 20 m up the tributary that joins the Pingle Brook from the north.  I searched for any evidence of use by otter (spraint, paw prints, holts or couches), but no such evidence was present. There were numerous sections of exposed soft mud and several good sprainting points. The location of the footbridge is close to the existing road bridge over the brook and the confluence with another watercourse which are both locations I would expect to find spraints and paw prints if otter were regularly using the brook.

The habitat where the footbridge will be located  is close mown grassland and ornamental plantings. The brook is approximately 15 cm deep at this location and there is limited marginal vegetation and as such little or no cover for otter with the grass being mown regularly up to the water edge.  Given the condition of the brook side habitat there is unlikely to an adverse impact on otter through the loss of cover or loss of known or potential holts or couches.  As such I think the main issues will be potential disturbance during construction acting as a barrier to otter movement. The footbridge will not restrict future movement through this area as otter will pass beneath the bridge.

As there are past records for otter on this watercourse I have advised my client that despite the lack of evidence of use at the time of the survey that it would make sense for a watching brief to be maintained prior to and during the construction period in case otter are present at the time of the start of construction. If there is evidence of recent activity at this time then an updated survey for holts and couches should be undertaken. If none ae found then a method of working during construction should be agreed with the contractor to ensure that otters can continue to move along the brook corridor safely during the construction period.

I would welcome any thoughts you have on the suggested approach. I understand my client would like to tie this approach up in condition.

Regards

Peter

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