

Atkins Comments

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Jacobs U.K. Limited
5 First Street
Manchester M15 4GU
United Kingdom
T +44 (0)161 235 6000
F +44 (0)161 235 6001
www.jacobs.com

Introduction and Background

Jacobs UK Ltd. (Jacobs) was commissioned by Lancashire County Council (LCC) to provide ecological services to support the proposed Cottam Parkway Railway Station scheme (hereafter referred to as the 'scheme'). The planning application for the scheme was submitted in September 2022 (planning reference LCC/2022/0049).

Following the and the subsequent consultation responses, further information requirements were raised by the planning applications ecology consultee (Atkins, March 2023) to address concerns raised on the potential impacts to Newton Marsh SSSI, brown hare and fish. This document forms the second of two documents that have been prepared on behalf of LCC in response to these consultation comments.

Assessment of Potential Impacts

Evidence Base

This assessment has been based on information contained within the below listed reports:

- Jacobs UK Ltd (2022). Cottam Parkway Railway Station. Aquatic Ecology Survey and Assessment Report. PO2. May 2021. B2327FEF-JAC-EBD-00-RP-ENV-0038. Environmental Statement. Volume 3: Appendix
- Lancashire County Council (2022). Cottam Parkway Railway Station. Environmental Statement. Volume 2: Main Statement. Chapter 6: Ecology. Document reference 07-ES-02-06-04.

Newton Marsh SSSI

A separate document entitled 'Newton Marsh SSSI Impact Assessment' (B2327FEF-JAC-EBD-00-RP-ENV-0053 Jacobs, 2023) has been produced to address to Natural England / ecology consultee comments.

Brown Hare

Impacts to brown hare were concluded to be significant due to the cumulative effects of land loss. This land loss includes the development area (road, station and car park) combined with the Land at Lea Road housing development which is to the direct north and south of the railway station. This land comprised pasture fields and amounts to approximately 16ha. Impacts to brown hare were concluded to be significant at a **Local** level.

Impacts from land loss was concluded as the proposed developments and their subsequent landscaping layouts would not be suitable for brown hare as the species would require relatively large areas of open grassland habitat. There were no known alternatives to the layout and landscaping design that could accommodate such use by brown hare aside from retention or creation of such land via the significant reduction of houses and car parking areas for the station.

Design alternatives were assessed prior to the final design layout. This included differences to the road position and access. However, all alternative designs were considered to result in the same land loss impacts as the finalised design due to land take.

Therefore, it is considered that the avoidance of significant impacts via land loss could only be achieved via the 'do-nothing' scenario or by retention of pasture land via the reduction of development footprints. Neither scenario would not meet strategic planning obligations as identified within the Planning Statement submitted as part of the planning application.

The design of the scheme went through a detailed iterative process including the minimisation of impacts to the identified range of protected / notable species. Similarly to the avoidance scenario, the only method of minimising land loss impacts would be the reduction in the development footprint.

Additional comments on Brown Hare are contained within the Response to Atkins Technical Note provided alongside this Technical Memorandum.

Fish

The impacts of the scheme on fish have been reviewed by an Aquatic Ecologist.

A desktop search for notable fish species present in the Lancaster Canal returned no records from the Environment Agency Ecology and Fish Data Explorer. However, a historical report by the Lancashire River Authority (1970) described a coarse fishery that included silver fish species such as pike (*Esox lucius*), carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), tench (*Tinca tinca*), bream (*Abramis brama*) perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), roach (*Rutilus rutilus*) and also European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). A web search for local angling clubs and their reported catches suggests Lancaster Canal still supports a coarse fishery with common species caught including perch, pike, carp, bream and roach (Lancaster Canal Fishery PAC).

The proposal to construct a clear span bridge over the Lancaster Canal will require bank works and include sheet piling installed at the water's edge. There is no requirement for instream works. There are no significant effects pathways or potential impacts including habitat loss, fragmentation, hydrological change nor aquatic species mortality anticipated from construction works. However, noise and vibration from piling works adjacent to the canal may disturb fish in close proximity to the works.

During operation, a clear span bridge will not interact with the bed or bank of the canal and will support unrestricted passage for migrating fish such as eels. The physical presence of the bridge will introduce shading to the watercourse that has the potential to reduce aquatic flora in the vicinity of the bridge. However, this shading will only be over a small area and represents a very small percentage of the total length of the canal. Furthermore, a small area of shading could be beneficial for fish by providing refuge during periods of extreme warm weather.

Mitigation measures described in the Environmental Statement include integrated construction mitigation with good practice pollution prevention controls. These will be used when working in or near watercourses to avoid pollutants entering the watercourse and protect aquatic features including fish. There will be a requirement to include mitigation that will minimise disturbance effects on fish from piling works. This could include vibro piling and 'soft start' techniques to reduce noise and vibration. Consultation with the Environment Agency will be required regarding timing of works to ensure sensitive spawning periods are avoided.

In summary, no significant impacts from the Scheme are predicted for fish.

Reference

Lancashire River Authority (1970). The Kendal, Lancaster and Preston Canal Fishery