

Jon Wells
Churchill House
Mill Hill
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West Yorkshire
WF8 4HY

6th January 2020

Dear Mr Wells,

Subject: Worsbrough Reservoir Car Park Proposal – Ecological Walkover Survey - Letter Report

Introduction

Middleton Bell Ecology were contracted to undertake an ecological walkover survey in connection with a proposed new car park and access route, to be constructed on the north bank of Worsbrough Reservoir by Barnsley & District Amalgamated Angling Society (Central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: SE 34607 03577; Application Reference Number: 2019/1356).

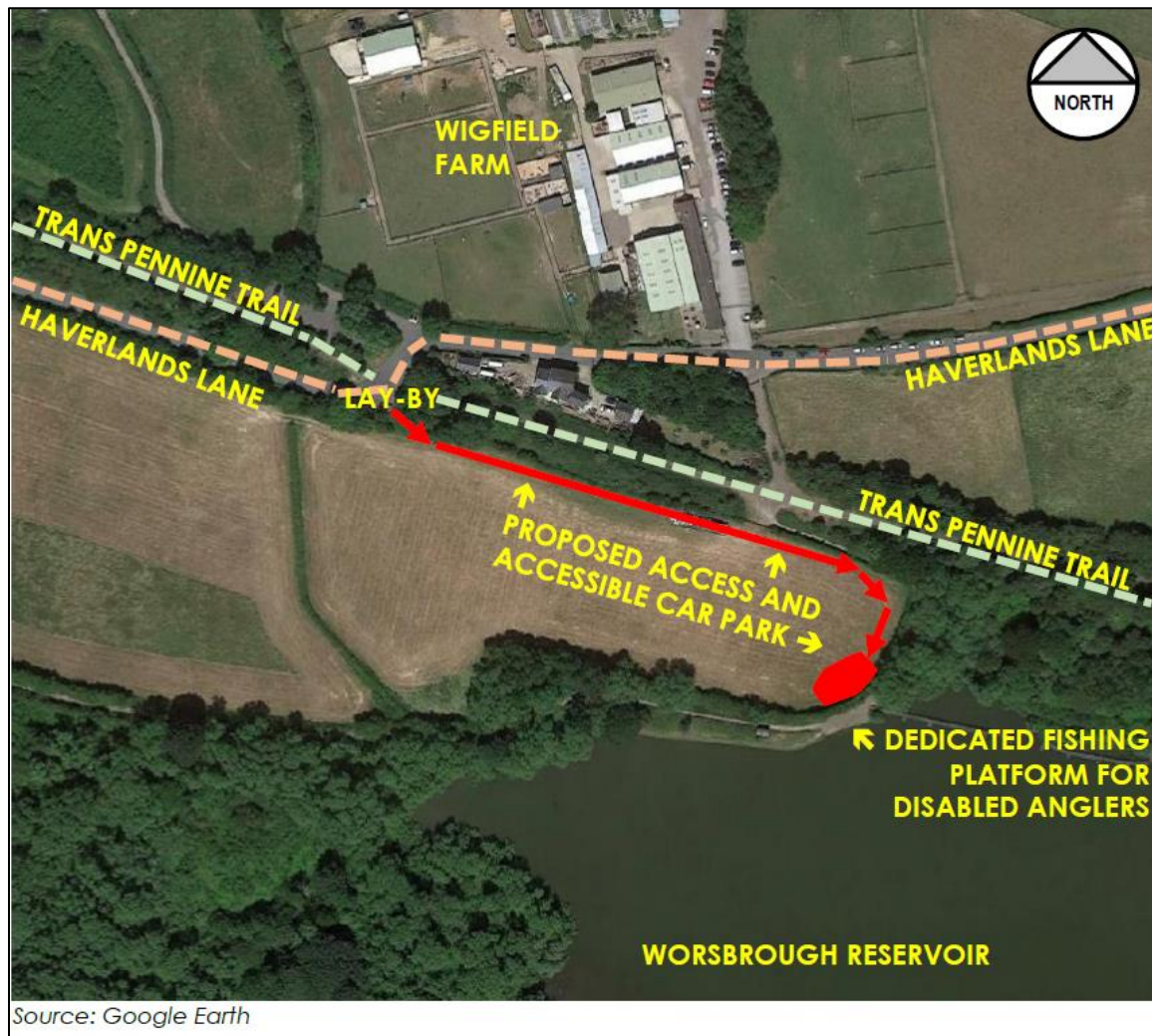
The new seven bay car park will be for the sole use of disabled anglers, who will access the adjacent dedicated fishing pegs via a 1.5m wide breach, to be created in the hedgerow located between the car park and platform. Access to the car park will be via a 3m wide track, approximately 240m in length and to include a single passing space, to connect via a locked gate to the existing lay-by off Haverlands Lane (Figure 1). It is not possible to bring the access route in via the closer field gate, located south of Wigfield Farm, as this would require users' vehicles to cross the Trans-Pennine Trail (TPT), posing safety issues.

The access track and car park will be defined by the existing hedgerow and stock fencing to the north and east of the development, while a new 1.2m high timber post and rail fence with a C8/80/15 galvanised wire stock proof mesh will be incorporated to the 'field side' of the proposals. It is proposed to plant eight new standard trees (comprising either field maple *Acer campestre* or alder *Alnus glutinosa*) and 15 new whips of hazel *Corylus avellana*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus* or holly *Ilex aquifolium* on the west side of the parking area as part of the proposal. The track and parking area surface are to be constructed using road planings (non-bitumen / non-tar).

The overwhelming majority of the proposed development area (with the exception of the Haverlands Lane lay-by) falls within Worsbrough Country Park Local Nature Reserve and is within the ownership of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC). The

development area is not however included in Worsbrough Reservoir Local Wildlife Site. Several fields surrounding the reservoir are known for their botanical diversity, however, the field survey documented in this letter was undertaken in January 2020, outside the peak botanical survey period. Fortunately, a recent botanical survey of fields surrounding the reservoir, including the field to be impacted by the proposed scheme, was commissioned by BMBC with the corresponding report made available (BMBC, 2019). The findings of the botanical survey are included in this report, where relevant.

Figure 1. Location and proposals plan, taken from Design and Access Statement (SWA, 2019)



Methodology

On the 3rd January 2020 Robert Bell (MCIEEM) carried out an extended Phase 1 habitat survey (JNCC, 2010) of the site. Notable, rare or scarce plant species were noted if present. Evidence of protected species or species of nature conservation importance was recorded where present at the time of survey. Species recorded are included within the report as appropriate.

Findings

The existing botanical survey report for the site (BMBC, 2019) states that the field within which the proposed car park and access route are to be located, is 'relatively species poor' and has the least botanical diversity of the four fields surrounding the reservoir, which were included in the survey. Of the four fields included in the BMBC survey, the field within which the new car park and access route are to be located, comprises the only one not subsequently recommended for inclusion within Worsbrough Reservoir Local Wildlife Site.

At the time of the 2020 survey, grassland within the field comprised a short sward as a result of grazing since the last cut (see Plates 1 & 2). Grass species recorded at the time of survey included cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and a meadow grass species *Poa* spp., together with ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*. This field comprises semi-improved grassland and conforms to the description provided in the botanical surveys report.

Plate 1. Looking southeast along access track route towards proposed car parking area beside reservoir



Plate 2. The proposed location of the new seven bay parking area



The hedgerow along the north and east field boundary is approximately 3m in height and 1m in width, with few gaps and a footpath along the north and east side. The hedge is dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with elder *Sambucus nigra* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. also recorded. The hedge has been subject to laying as a past management practice. The site hedgerow does not classify as Important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 due to a lack of species diversity.

At the western end of the new access track, a new gate will provide access to the lay-by off Haverlands Lane (see Figure 2 and Plate 3). Between the field and lay-by is a small embankment shaded by adjacent hawthorn and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* plants. The ground in this area was covered largely by bramble.

Figure 2. Proposed gate access from Haverlands Lane, taken from Design and Access Statement (SWA, 2019)

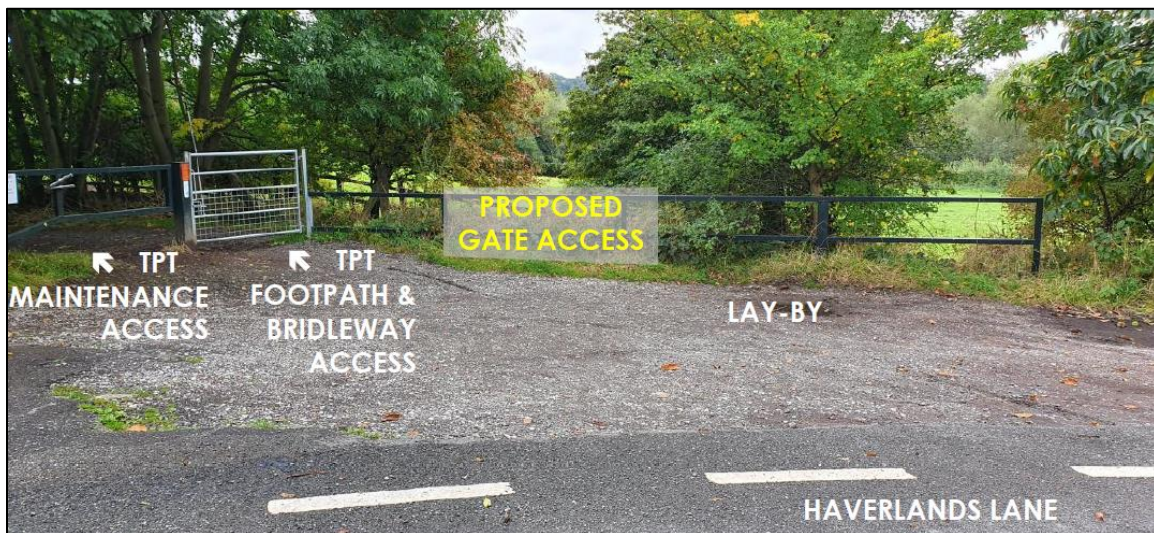


Plate 3. Looking north across proposed new access location from Haverlands Lane



No evidence of any protected species, either on or near the site, was recorded during the field survey. It is however noted that birds may nest in hedgerow and/or bramble plants at the locations of the new access point from Haverlands Lane and between the car park and fishing pegs.

Bird species recorded either on or near the proposed development site during the field survey included dunnock *Prunella modularis*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, black headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and blackbird *Turdus merula*.

Assessment

The area of grassland to be impacted by the proposed scheme supports relatively low botanical diversity, in comparison with other local fields. Other than a small breach in the hedgerow to the south-east of the car park, in order to allow access to the fishing pegs, all existing mature trees and hedgerows bordering and adjacent to the proposed construction site will be retained. The land-take of habitats required in connection with the proposed development is not considered to be of importance to nature conservation at greater than a site level.

Only disabled anglers will be issued a key to use the car park. Given that anglers are likely to spend several hours if not most of the day at their fishing platform, vehicle movements along the access track will be infrequent. The footpath adjacent to the fishing pegs experiences regular use by anglers and other recreational users, notably including dog walkers. In addition, the TPT which runs east to west past the northern end of Worsbrough Reservoir is also well used. Taking these considerations into account, the construction and long-term use of the new car park is not expected to result in a significant increase in disturbance to the reservoir and/or adjacent semi-natural habitats.

Land-take of hedgerow plants as part of the proposal will be very limited, however, it is expected that some cutting back of retained vegetation will also be required. If hedgerow plant removal or cutting back of tree/shrubs is undertaken during the bird nesting period (March to August) then there is a risk of nests being destroyed. All bird nests are subject to legal protection during the period of nest construction and use. If vegetation clearance works are required during the bird nesting period, then it is recommended that a nesting bird check is first undertaken.

It is noted that the proposed development includes the planting of new trees and hedgerow whips at the boundary of the proposed car parking area. In line with the aims of Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (to secure gains for biodiversity) and to offset the loss of grassland along the access track/car park, it is recommended that new native hedgerow planting continues along the field side of the new access track. This measure would increase the extent of hedgerow in the local area to the benefit of farmland bird species and other faunal species, whilst visually screening the cars accessing the car park.

Should you have any queries in relation to the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Bell'.

Robert Bell MCIEEM
Principal Ecologist

References

BMBC (2019) Fields around Worsbrough Reservoir, Barnsley. Report on the ecological surveys undertaken for BMBC, 2016 to 2018. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Barnsley.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a Technique for Environmental Audit. Reprinted by JNCC, Peterborough.

SWA (2019) Proposed accessible car parking at Worsbough Reservoir for Barnsley & District Amalgamated Anglers Society – Design and Access Statement. Steve Wells Associates Ltd, Pontefract.