

Mr Peter Newman
Hessett
Suffolk

November 3rd 2016

Re: Drain maintenance along The Street, Hessett

Dear Peter,

Thank you for inviting me to look at the drains bordering 'The Street' in the village of Hessett, in order to offer advice to the parish council in relation to improving the passage of water and managing the drains for water vole and other wildlife.

Many sections of the drain occur at the end of privately owned property and gardens and so a detailed water vole survey was not possible without permissions. However, from the road it was evident that water voles are present as a number of bankside burrows and droppings were observed. Sightings have also been confirmed by local residents.

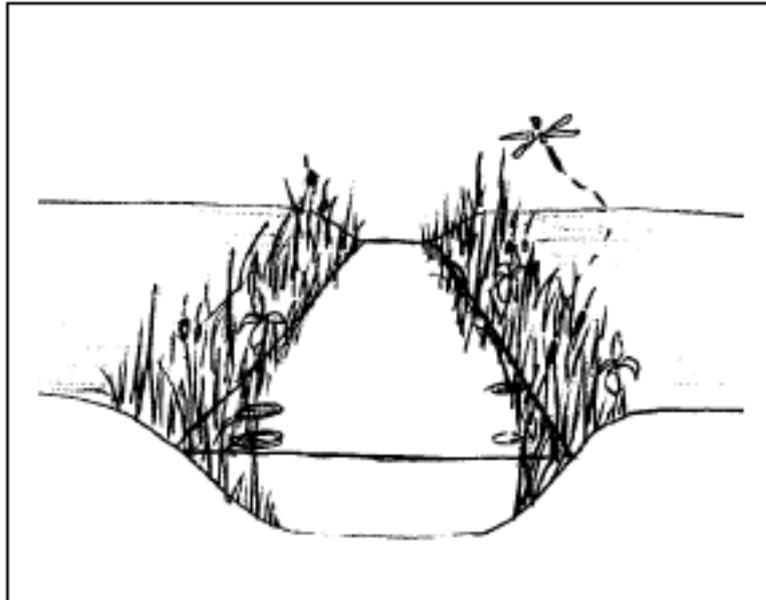
The majority of the drain runs along the western side of The Street before passing under the road and heading east along Beyton Road. A narrow verge of vegetation separates the drain from the road and during periods of heavy rain it was explained that the drains spill over into the road, sometimes resulting in both lanes being inundated.



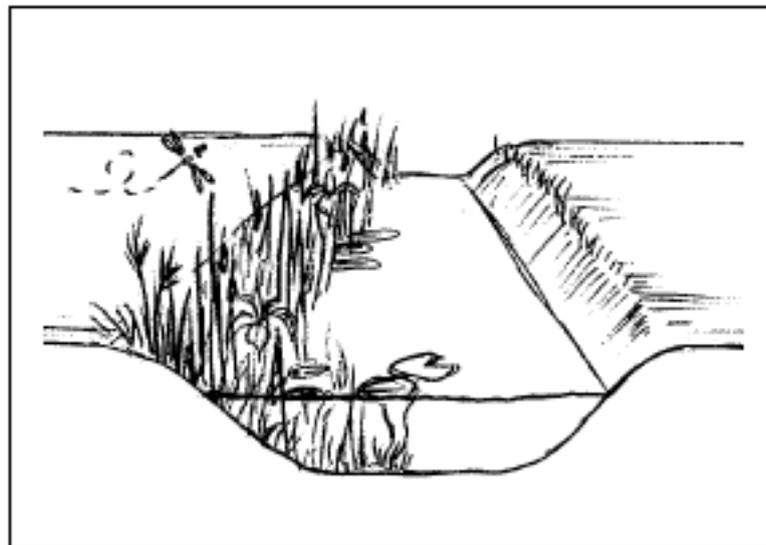
Due to the segmentation of the drain and the fact that some sections flow through enclosed pipes rather than open drains, maintenance is not consistent and therefore vegetation along the banks and within the main channel occurs in many successional stages as pictured above.

It is thought by residents that silt and vegetation within the drains impedes the passage of water. However, concerns were raised that management may harm water vole.

Due to the presence of water vole and their protected status I would recommend sensitive management as detailed in the attached 'managing your watercourse' factsheet. The most appropriate methods would be either option A: *Clear or dredge only the centre of the water-course leaving the sides intact.*



or option C: *Clear only one side of the water-course leaving the other completely intact to act as a refuge for wildlife and ensure water vole burrows are always available.*



Option A would be least destructive, could be carried out by hand, would leave both banks intact, thus providing optimal habitat on both banks and access to burrows for water vole and provide shelter and foraging opportunities for invertebrates and small mammals. The best time to carry out these works is during late autumn and winter.

Removal of accumulated organic matter from the centre of the channel should allow the water during periods of heavy rainfall, to flow along the drain more freely providing connecting pipes are not blocked.

In sections where the channel is open but dominated by duckweed, some could be removed by netting. Duckweeds are tiny free-floating plants. Like algae, they have their place in healthy well-balanced waterbodies. However, where they dominate, they tend to indicate heavily silted waterbodies or those with very deep leaf litter and often occur in sheltered situations. Duckweeds absorb phosphates as they grow, so removing some phosphates (leaf litter/accumulated organic matter) from the water may help. Once netted the material could be left on the bankside for a least 24 hours to allow creatures within it to make their way back into the water.

Any materials removed from the channel should be disposed of away from the drain to ensure that nutrients released as they break down do not leach back into the drain.

Please note: Due to new Environmental Permitting Regulations, works may need to be registered with the Environment Agency and I would suggest contacting them to confirm this.

Additionally, due to the number of waterbodies (ponds, drains and ditches) in the area, the presence of great crested newt should be considered. Please refer to the attached information regarding best practice guidance in relation to this species.

I hope this information helps. For greater management detail, please refer to the attached information sheets and should you have any questions, please do come back to me.

Kind regards

Leonie Washington
Wildlife Site Adviser