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C/O Callum McConnachie
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27th September 2019

FAO: Callum McConnachie

RE: BG19.256.2 The Stables, Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire, Great Crested Newt Working Method Statement

Dear Callum,

I write to provide you with a working method statement which seeks to mitigate against adverse impacts to great crested newts during the construction works relating to a proposal for the conversion of the current stables and outhouses into a residential dwelling with associated wildlife sensitive landscaping at The Stables, Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire, SK11 0RS.

Background
Three ponds are recorded within 500m of the application area. Ponds 1 and 2 are located approximately 100m west of the site and pond 3 was located approximately 250m south-east (Annexe 1). Anecdotal evidence implies that Ponds 1 and 2 are plastic lined but contain a population of smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris)* suggesting a likelihood that ponds could be used by great crested newts (*Triturus vulgaris*). A network of grassland, mature hedgerows and treelines considered optimal habitat for the terrestrial phase of GCN are identified within the surrounding environment. No major barriers to species dispersal were identified between the application site and any pond within 500m of the application site.

The impact on suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN within the application is considered to be low, pertaining to small scale vegetation clearance, and onsite construction activities limited to existing hardstanding areas relating to the buildings currently on site (B1, B2 and B3). As such, the risk of encountering a great crested newt, if present is considered to be low.

Great crested newts and their eggs, breeding sites and resting places are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Without due consideration for GCN, an unlikely negative impact may result from onsite work activities. A Working Method Statement (RAMS) is provided below which will minimise the impact to great crested newts to 'negligible'.

Working Method Statement

Pre-commencement check

- Works will be timed avoid the hibernation period for GCN (November-February inclusive)
- Undertake any ground clearance works under the supervision of a suitably qualified and licenced GCN ecologist. The Ecological clerk of works (EcOW) ecologist will undertake a systematic search of suitable habitat patches using a high-powered torch the evening prior to the commencement of ground works. The systematic search will be undertaken during the active period (March – October) when night-time temperatures are above 5 degrees, and when conditions are considered optimal post rainfall or during light rain. If no newts are found, then works can proceed following the

measures outlined below. If GCN are encountered, then it will be necessary to obtain an EPS mitigation licence from Natural England to allow the work to proceed lawfully.

Toolbox talk

The likelihood of GCN presences is considered unlikely, however as a precautionary measure, the site contractor teams will be briefed on the potential for GCN to be present, on the legal protection of GCN and on the precautionary working method that will be followed.

- All site staff will be made aware of how to identify newt species and of what steps to take in the event that a GCN is encountered.

- Information will be provided during the toolbox talk which will be retained at the site office at all times for reference. This would include information amphibian identification, working method and contact details for the ecologist, should GCN be encountered.

Site clearance works
The following guidelines are designed to mitigate the impact upon great crested newts during the site clearance phase of the development.

- Ground clearance works are to be undertaken during the period of peak newt activity (March – October) they should be undertaken during daylight hours when newts will not be migrating. The ground should be cleared following a systematic approach allowing potential fauna to disperse. An EcOW will be present to ensure the procedure is adhered to and to relocate any amphibians / fauna found during works

- Vegetation clearance should be undertaken using a digger, fitted with a toothed bucket, to slowly rake through the surface vegetation. This process will be overseen by the ecologist, who will carefully search for and remove any amphibians encountered. Where amphibians are encountered, the ecologist will identify the species and place the individuals in a container for transportation to an area of suitable terrestrial habitat. Should individuals be found when an ecologist is not present, the ecologist should be contacted to confirm the species and identify and provide advice.

Precautionary construction measures

- Check any open trenches or other excavations during the initial stages of the development works each morning. If GCN are found, then works should stop and advice be sought from Natural England or a licenced GCN ecologist.

- Where the installation of pipelines is required, directional drilling should be used to cross areas of core habitat and dispersal routes.

- If materials are to be stored on site at any time, then these materials will be stored on pallets.

- Waste materials should be removed from site immediately or placed in skips.

Following site clearance, it is considered that works can continue unsupervised, if amphibians are encountered an ecologist can answer any questions.

This information is considered sufficient to discharge conditions relating to planning application SMD/2018/0792.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries.

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Yours Sincerely,

John Harvey, Great Crested Newt Licence (2018-37648-CLS-CLS)

Consultant Ecologist
For and on behalf of Brindle & Green Limited

Appendix 1 – Pond Map



OS Map of the project site ponds within a 500m radius. Site boundary is indicated in red.

Appendix 2 – References

Bell, S. McGillivary, D. (2006) *Environmental Law*. 6th ed. Oxford University Press.

Byron, H (2000) *Biodiversity and Environmental Impact Assessment: A Good Practice Guide for Road Schemes*. The RSPB, WWF-UK, English Nature and the Wildlife Trusts, Sandy.

Gent, A.H., & Gibson, S.D., eds 1998. Herpetofauna Workers Manual. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Great crested newt mitigation guidelines. (English Nature, 2001).

Langton T, Beckett C, Foster J. (2001). Great crested newt Conservation Handbook. Froglife.

Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143-155.

Appendix 2 – Great Crested Newt Legislation and Ecology

Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is fully protected under schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017. The latter legislation transposes into UK law, EU council directive 92/43/EEC, which lists great crested newts in Annex IV. This annex lists species requiring strict protection from capture, killing and disturbance of individuals and their habitats. This protection extends to 500 metres from any breeding pond.

The main factors in the decline of the great crested newt has been the loss of

suitable habitat. This includes:

- The loss of ponds due to development
- The loss and fragmentation of terrestrial habitats
- The introduction of fish into breeding ponds
- The decline of water quality due to pollution

Great crested newts require water bodies for breeding and egg laying from March through to July. The rest of the year they can be found in suitable surrounding terrestrial habitats looking for food or searching for a suitable site for hibernation. The terrestrial green corridors between ponds and other populations are very important. The type of habitat around a pond will influence the movement of newts and the distance they disperse from a pond. Great crested newts over winter in terrestrial habitats that protect them from desiccation, bad weather and disturbance. They prefer rough grassland with dense tussocks, woodland and scrub with a well-developed litter layer, dead wood, piles of stones, gaps in the ground and generally places that are moist where they can find food and cover.