Great Crested Newt Mitigation & Reasonable Avoidance Measures

Site Location	Barns Lea Farm, Rushton Spencer, SK11 0QZ
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Content

1.0 – Introduction
2.0 – Objectives
3.0 – Proposed Mitigation/Protection
4.0 - Procedure if Species are Discovered on Site

Appendix 1: Protection Zone

Appendix 2: Toolbox Talk

Appendix 3: Operative Brief Record

Appendix 4: Other notable Protected Species

1.0 Introduction

Chase Ecology have been commissioned by the client to prepare a great crested newt Triturus cristatus (GCN) Reasonable Avoidance Measures Statement (RAMS) in relation to the works proposed on the Barns Lea Farm, Rushton Spencer, SK11 0QZ site.

The works proposed involve the conversion of a current storage structure into a residential.

This document details the proposed protection & avoidance measures that will be implemented to minimise the probability of GCN being disturbed, injured or killed during construction.

A single pond approx. 22 meters from the building has demonstrated GOOD value for Great Crested Newts as below HIS. However, an eDNA survey in June 2020 demonstrated a negative result for Great Crested Newt.

No other standing waterbodies were observed within 250 meters of the development other than a recorded land drain 130 meters South/East which was dry during the survey visit on the 25th June 2020.

2.0 Objectives

- Avoid committing an offence by minimising the risk of encountering GCN as far as practically possible through a non-licenced approach; and to ensure that favourable conservation status of GCN is maintained;

- Any work-related activities on the site, such as mobilisation / demobilisation, vegetation clearance, excavations or storage of materials in areas of suitable GCN habitat may potentially affect this species. As a result, safeguards must be implemented to protect GCN and this Method Statement details measures to be implemented on site to ensure these objectives are achieved. Through the implementation of the Reasonable Avoidance Measures detailed below, the risk of committing an offence under the above legislation and therefore impacting the favourable conservation status of GCN, is significantly reduced.

3.0 Proposed Mitigation/Protection

Protection & Mitigation measures are required to ensure that any GCN (if present) are protected during the construction from disturbance, killing, injury, capture and habitat destruction within suitable terrestrial habitats within the development footprint. In the absence of mitigation, GCN could be disturbed, injured or killed and suitable habitat could be damaged.

This method statement should be adopted during all works activities across the development.

To minimise any impacts of the works upon GCN, the following mitigation measures must be implemented throughout all works activities including mobilisation / demobilisation:

<u>Site Operatives</u>

- All operatives on site will be given access to this document to confirm awareness of GCN and obligations/RAM's in order for protection.

- All de-vegetation work of hedgerows and scrub if applicable will be subject to a hand-cut to within 0.5m of the ground. An ecologist will then conduct a hand-search. Any remaining large roots will be pulled out by machine under direct supervision of an ecologist. This must be carried out from March to September to prevent disturbance to GCN which may use these features for hibernation.

- Plant & Materials will be loaded and operated in a way which offers minimal disturbance to the habitats surrounding & within the development. ***See Appendix 1: Protection Zone***

- Potential places of shelter (e.g. rubble / log piles) will not be disturbed during the works unless under supervision of a licenced ecologist. The licenced ecologist will also make an assessment of the work depending on the time of year the development takes place.

- Excavations will be immediately backfilled where possible as the works progress. Any excavations which are to be left open overnight will be boarded over to prevent trapping of any GCN.

- All equipment and materials to be stored off the ground and away from semi-natural habitats e.g. stick to hardstanding, or store off the ground on pallets.

Ecological Clark of Works (ECoW)

- An ECoW will be present on Site during all the vegetation removal works within 250m of the pond if applicable to the development works. This will include both hedgerows and long vegetation.

- The suitable habitat to be removed (where required) will be subjected to a hand search by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to works. The Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be an experienced amphibian ecologist holding a Natural England Great Crested Newt Survey Licence.

- If a GCN is found on site it cannot be moved (even by a licenced ecologist – as this is not included within a survey licence) and all works would have to stop until a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence has been applied for and granted by Natural England.

- Although no evidence of Great Crested Newt activity was identified within the single pond on site, if direct disturbance or modification of this water feature is to be made during development an ecologist must be consulted and further assessment may be required along with suitable enhancement to limit a shortfall in biodiversity.

4.0 Procedure if Species are Discovered on Site

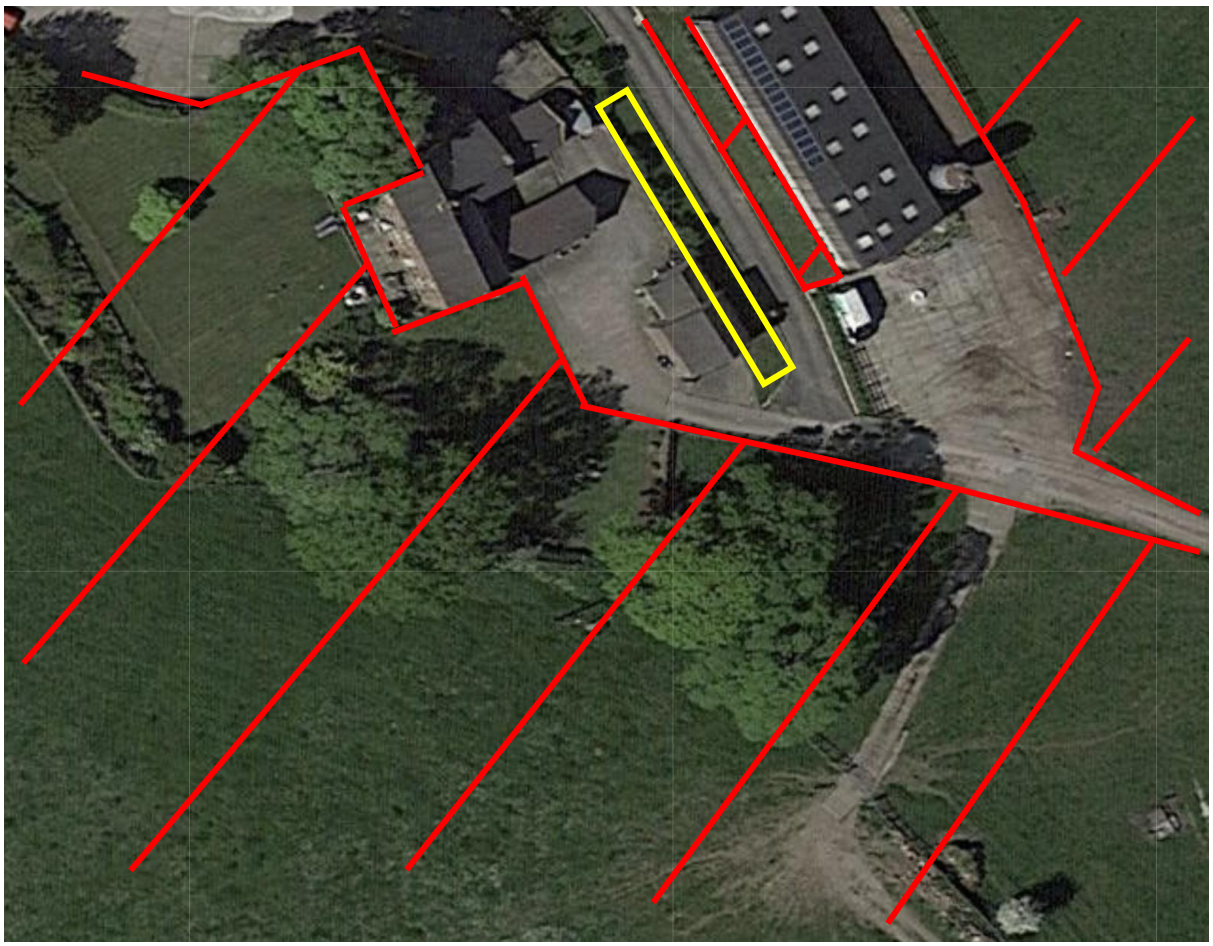
If the event any species of newts, reptiles or any other protected/notable species are discovered, all works will need to stop immediately and the site ecologist/Chase Ecology will be called for advice on how to proceed.

Appendix 1: Protection Zone

Below plan view of the site which details (**in red**) the protection zone for GCN where no works including the storage of materials or operations of plant will be carried out.

Operatives will also avoid using this protection zone as a pathway to access the site.

If the protection zone must be penetrated during the development works the ecologist/Chase Ecology must be consulted first where suitable advice can be offered.



The narrow section of grass directly to the North/East of the structure must remain in a managed condition with the grass regular maintained below 25mm to prevent any features of value to GCN such as shelter. Section noted in YELLOW.

Appendix 2: Toolbox Talk

Great crested newt

What are they and how are they recognised?

Newts are amphibians – they can live both in water and on land. Adult great crested newts (GCN) are 110-170 mm long (about twice as big as other newts) and are black or dark brown. During spring and summer, males have a jagged crest along the back and the tail has a silver stripe along it. The females do not have the crest or silver tail stripe, but have a bright orange stripe along the bottom of their tail. Both males and females have bright orange bellies with black spots.

Where are they found?

GCN occur in rural, urban and suburban sites. GCN usually prefer medium to large ponds in which to, but can be found in any body of water on site including temporary pools. GCN spend most of their time on land – they can be found in grass, scrub and woodland and under logs and stones within 250 m to 500 m of the breeding pond.

When are they found?

GCN are nocturnal and are seen mostly at night. They are found in ponds between March and June , but can be seen on land at any time of year.

What should be done if a GCN is found?

GCN are fully protected against killing, capture, injury and disturbance, and the places they use for shelter or protection are protected against damage, destruction or obstruction. If a GCN (adult, juvenile or tadpole) is found (or suspected) on site after works have started, all works in the area must stop immediately and expert advice must be sought.

If there is any doubt of the newt species that has been found, stop work and consult an expert.



What else may be seen?

If GCN are found in a pond, common and/or palmate newts may also be found. Common and palmate newts do not receive the same protection as GCN except in Northern Ireland where the common newt is fully protected. Adults of these species are about the same size as young GCN but are a lighter colour.

Penalties

Breaking the law can lead to fines of up to £5000 per offence and, potentially, prison sentences of up to six months. Any vehicle used to commit the offence may be held liable.

Appendix 3: Operative Brief Record

Name	Organisation	Date	Signature

Appendix 4: Other notable Protected Species

If the proposed works are to be carried out closely to sections of mature hedgerow which includes excavation. These habitats offer a suitable environment to nesting birds during March to September.

Birds during this time are protected and no disturbance should be offered when on the nest.

If works are to be carried out during this time a nesting bird survey would be required before any works progress including.

- Removal/cutback of hedgerows
- Removal/cutback of trees
- Removal/cutback of deep vegetation
- Removal of log piles and other suitable nesting refugia
- Close works to all of the above

A nesting bird survey must be carried out 24 hours prior to works taking place. If birds and or their nests are observed during this time the ecologist/Chase Ecology will advise on suitable protection measures to be implemented.

If long term works are to be carried out within 5 meters of the hedgerow during March to September a suitable protective screen or hoarding would be advantageous to limit possible disturbance.