

GREAT CRESTED NEWT SURVEY REPORT

LAND AT BETTISFIELD, WHITCHURCH,
SY13 2LU

for

TAYLOR REEDS HOMES LTD

NB. The great crested newt and its habitat are strictly protected in law in Britain. Appropriate caution should be used when circulating reports concerning them.



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REPORT CONTROL SHEET

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Results and Actions Required

1. Presence/absence and population estimate surveys for great crested newt were conducted on a drainage ditch (OS Ref: SJ460353) within the Land at Bettisfield, Whitchurch, SY13 2LU.
2. Presence/absence and population estimate surveys for great crested newt were conducted on a pond within Whitchurch, SY13 2LU between 27 April 2023 and 25 May 2023 by a suitably licensed and experienced scientist.
3. The survey techniques employed were traditional survey methods including bottle trapping, ova searches and torching. These were carried out six times.
4. It can be concluded that the greatest number of great crested newt counted by a single method was one great crested newt which generates a population class estimate of small. The pond also hosts population of smooth newts *Lissotriton vulgaris*, frogs *Rana temporaria* and several invertebrate species.
5. A full European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) application must be made to Natural Resources Wales for works to be legally undertaken on the proposed development site. The application can be made once planning permission has been granted but must be submitted prior to works commencing. Prior to an EPSML being sought, a method statement must be created for the site. This method statement will detail how the impacts of the proposed development will be avoided or mitigated as well as including an approximate timescale of the works and plans showing the location of compensation and enhancement measures.
6. Provided that a full method statement is written and accompanied by appropriate plans and drawings for planning assessment and determination, and that other recommendations and enhancements are successfully implemented, it should be possible for the proposed development to proceed and for there to be no long-term impacts upon great crested newts and their favourable conservation status.

7. These actions are obligatory to comply with current legislation, planning policy and best practice as recognised by the various statutory authorities. They are intended to fulfil ecological planning formalities and facilitate the implementation of the project.
8. This ecological report will remain valid for a period of 12 months from the date of the last survey i, until May 2024. Further surveys may be required to update the site information if planning is not obtained, or works do not commence within this time period.

SURVEY RESULTS

[Introductory notes](#)

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment was carried out by Betts Ecology on 2 February 2023 (Betts Ecology, 2023) that found two suitable water bodies within a 500m radius from the site during a desk-based search. The stream to the north of the site might have served as a potential commuting feature, but this is unlikely to support a great crested newt breeding population.

The stream identified in the Betts Ecology Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), was found to have a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) score of 0.78, indicating it as being of “Good” suitability for great crested newts. The second suitable water body was the drainage ditch separating two fields, which was found to have an HSI score of 0.63, “Average” suitability. See HSI calculation appendix on our PEA report.

Public records showed significance for amphibians within the area, revealing sixteen records of common frog *Rana temporaria* and ten records of common toad *Bufo bufo*, the most recent for both being in 2021. There are four records of unidentified newts within the 2km search area, the most recent being in 2007. There are nine records of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* within the 2km search area in 2020. There are two records of smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, the most recent being in 2015.

Of the nine great crested newt records, the most recent was immediately within the north-west portions of the site, confirming a historical presence of the species within the site area, and it was concluded that further survey work should be undertaken on the drainage ditch.

Survey Results

Please refer to the tables below for the survey findings.

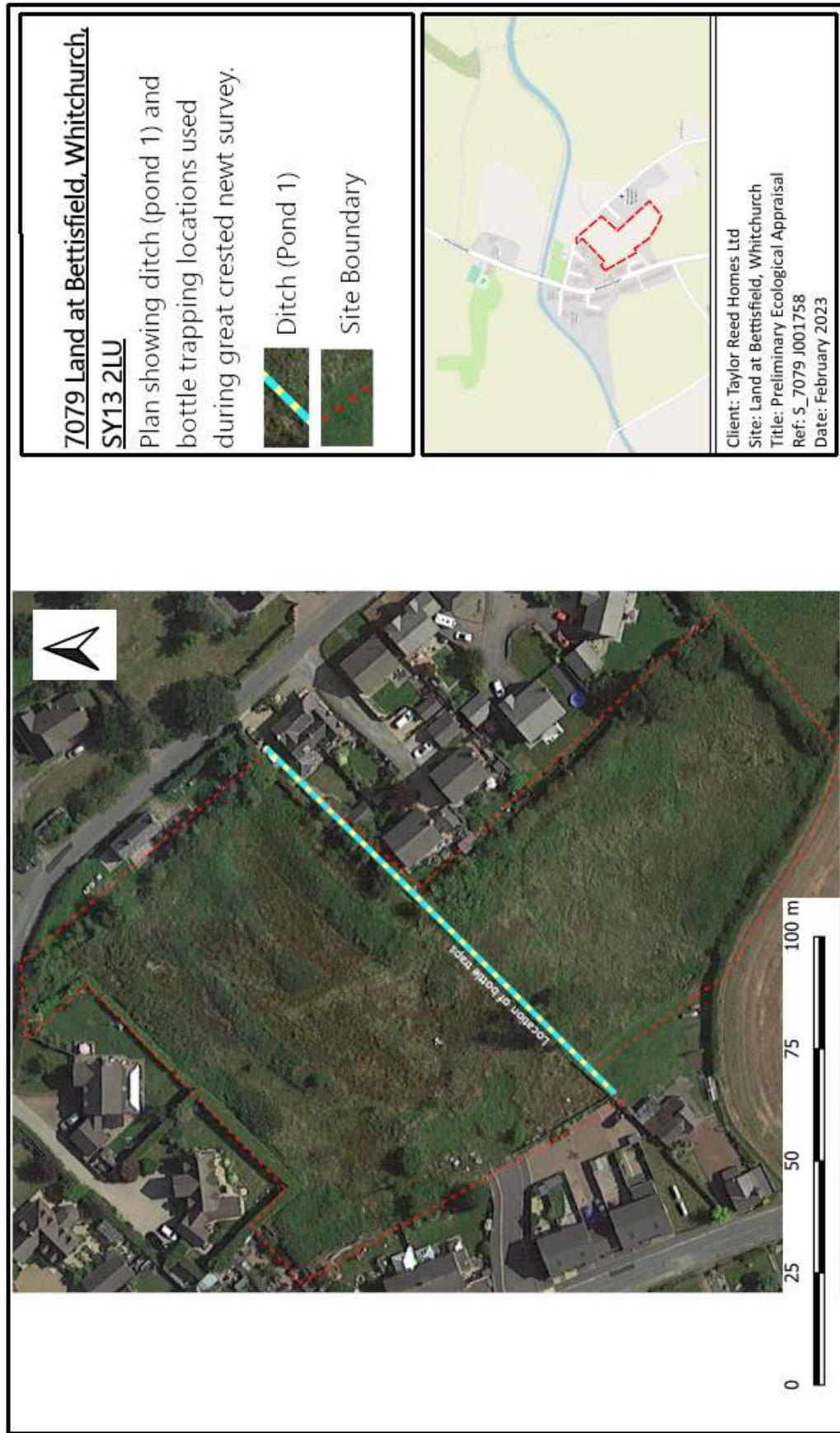
Table 1 displays a summary of the findings of the survey. Table 2 shows images of species found. Tables 3 - 5, (found in Annex 1) show the detailed findings (including full survey conditions) of the aquatic surveys of the site.

Summary of Survey Results

Table 1: Summary of great crested newt survey results at Land in Bettisfield.

Date	Temperature	Great Crested Newts	Other
27 April 2023	11°C Partially turbid	Bottle Trapping: 0 ♂, 1 ♀ Torching: 0 ♂, 0 ♀ Eggs: 0	Bottle Trapping: 1 ♂ and 0 ♀ smooth newts; 0 ♂ and 0 ♀ palmate newts. Torching: 1 smooth/palmate newts. Eggs: 0
11 May 2023	18°C Partially turbid	Bottle Trapping: 0 ♂, 0 ♀ Torching: 1 ♂, 0 ♀ Eggs: 0	Bottle Trapping: 0 ♂ and 0 ♀ smooth newts; 0 ♂ and 0 ♀ palmate newts. Torching: 0 smooth/palmate newts. Eggs: 0
25 May 2023	21°C No turbidity	Bottle Trapping: 0 ♂, 0 ♀ Torching: 0 ♂, 1 ♀ Eggs: 1	Bottle Trapping: 0 ♂ and 0 ♀ smooth newts; 0 ♂ and 0 ♀ palmate newts. Torching: 1 smooth/palmate newts. Eggs: 0
Peak Count: 1 great crested newt - "small population".			

SITE PLAN



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Betts were commissioned to undertake presence/absence and population estimate surveys for great crested newt on a drainage ditch within Land at Bettisfield, Whitechurch, Shropshire. These were undertaken between 27 April 2023 and 25 May 2023 by a suitably licensed and experienced ecological scientist supported by a health and safety survey assistant. The survey techniques employed were traditional survey methods including bottle trapping, ova searches and torching. It can be concluded that the greatest number of great crested newt counted by a single method was one great crested newt which generates a population class estimate of small. The pond also hosts population of smooth newts *Lissotriton vulgaris*, frogs *Rana temporaria* and several invertebrate species.

The adjoining piece of land is the subject of a planning application for residential development along with associated landscaping, car parking and access roads. A full European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) application must be made to Natural Resources Wales for works to be legally undertaken on the proposed development site. The application can be made once planning permission has been granted but must be submitted prior to works commencing. Prior to an EPSML being sought, a method statement will be created for the site. This method statement will detail how the impacts of the proposed development will be avoided or mitigated as well as including an approximate timescale of the works and plans showing the location of compensation and enhancement measures (e.g., creation of a pond, improving terrestrial habitats and provision of hibernacula).

Provided that a full method statement is written and accompanied by appropriate plans and drawings for planning assessment and determination and that other recommendations and enhancements are successfully implemented, it should be possible for the proposed development to proceed and for there to be no long-term impacts upon great crested newts and their favourable conservation status.

This ecological report will remain valid for a period of twelve months from the date of the last survey *i.e.*, until May 2024. Further surveys may be required to update the site information if planning is not obtained or works do not commence within this time period.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Scope and objectives

This report was commissioned by Taylor Reed Homes Ltd in respect of the proposed residential development along with associated landscaping, car parking and access roads of Land at Bettisfield, Whitchurch, Shropshire. The objectives of this survey are:

1. to provide specialist advice on the possible presence of protected species (great crested newts) in relation to planning requirements;
2. to report the survey findings and make any appropriate recommendations to ensure compliance with wildlife law and recognised best practice.

Limitations

Surveys were undertaken on 27 April, 11 May & 25 May 2023 by licensed scientists from Betts. These dates fall within the recommended period for conducting great crested newt surveys (English Nature, 2001).

During the survey on 25 May 2023, the drainage ditch had dried out. A full fingertip search and torching was completed.

The air temperature during surveys varied between 11c and 21c.

Please be aware that, because the natural environment is dynamic, ecological reports generally have a limited period of currency. Many statutory authorities now regard one year as the maximum time that should elapse before a report will need to be updated; occasionally it may be longer but it may also be less. Where a Protected Species Licence is to be applied for once planning permission has been granted, a walk-over of the site should be carried out **within three months** of an application being submitted to check that the habitats have not changed significantly since the survey was carried out.

Betts are a scientific practice. Any information relating to legal matters in this report is provided in good faith but does not purport in any way to give any advice on or interpretation of the law whatsoever. Professional legal advice should always be sought. Any designs, specifications, advice, suggestions, or comments written or verbal relating to construction or supervision of building-related work of any kind are provided for consideration only and under no circumstances are to be interpreted as provision of design, management or supervision *sensu* the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

General site description and methods

The survey employed a combination of bottle traps, ova searches, natural refuge searches and torchlight counts. The use of a combination of techniques is more reliable than one on its own, and increases the probability of finding great crested newts if they are present (English Nature, 2001).

The amphibian ova searches were conducted following Grayson, Parker and Mullaney (1991) and the other survey techniques followed English Nature (2001) using appropriate equipment including one million candlepower lamps. Accessible plants and suitable oviposition substrata were examined for the presence of great crested newt ova. An adequate number of bottle traps were set on each survey. Full details are available if required.

Background to great crested newts and their protection

The great crested newt, *Triturus cristatus* (Laurenti, 1758), is afforded strict protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Intentional killing, injuring or taking/capturing, possessing (including parts or derivatives), intentional or reckless damage, destruction or obstruction of any structure or place used for shelter or protection, selling, offering or exposing for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale (alive or dead, including parts or derivatives) are all prohibited without a licence. Of particular note is the proscription of intentional or reckless damage of, disturbance to, or obstruction of access to, places

of shelter which applies to both aquatic and terrestrial habitats. This is an advisory comment – you must consult the legislation itself for full details.

The great crested newt is also on Appendix II of strictly protected fauna of the Bern Convention (the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats) to which Britain is a signatory. Listed fauna are required to be strictly protected against deliberate killing, capture, damage/destruction of breeding and nesting sites, disturbance, taking of eggs, trading (including parts or derivatives), *etc.*

TABLE: 2 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs all taken between 27 April and 25 May 2023.



Plate 1: Great Crested Newt from bottle trap Survey



Plate 4: Smooth Newt from Bottle Trap Survey



Plate 2: Great diving beetle from bottle trap surveys



Plate 5: Habitat 25 May 2023



Plate 3: Ditch Habitat 27 April 2023



Plate 6: Ditch Habitat 11 May 2023

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[Annex 1](#)

Tables 3, 4, 5: Results of the Aquatic Surveys of drainage ditch 1.

Table 3: Results of aquatic great crested newt survey for Pond 1 Land off Bettisfield

Date: 27 April 2023	Weather conditions: Dry/Cloudy				Torching visibility: Fair			
	Air temp.: 11 °C				No. bottle traps set: 12			
Bottle Traps	♀		♂		Unsexed		Total	
Great crested newt	1		0		0		1	
Smooth newt	0		1		0		1	
Palmate newt	0		0		0		0	
Other								
Netting	♀	♂	Unsexed	♀	♂	Unsexed	Total	Total
Great crested newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smooth newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palmate newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other								
	Great crested newt (<i>T. cristatus</i>)			Smooth/palmate newt (<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i> /L. <i>helveticus</i>)			Other	
Ova (presence/absence)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Torching	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Comments	Highly vegetated with grasses with a maximum depth of 18 inches							

Table 4: Results of aquatic great crested newt survey for Pond 1 Land off Bettisfield

Date: 11 May 2023	Weather conditions: Dry/Cloudy				Torching visibility: Poor			
	Air temp.: 18 °C				No. bottle traps set: 12			
Bottle Traps	♀		♂		Unsexed		Total	
Great crested newt	0		0		0		0	
Smooth newt	0		0		0		0	
Palmate newt	0		0		0		0	
Other								
Netting	♀	♂	Unsexed	♀	♂	Unsexed	Total	Total
Great crested newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smooth newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palmate newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other								
	Great crested newt (<i>T. cristatus</i>)			Smooth/palmate newt (<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i> /L. <i>helveticus</i>)			Other	
Ova (presence/absence)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Torching	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Comments	Highly vegetated with grasses with a maximum depth of 16 inches							

Table 5: Results of aquatic great crested newt survey for Pond 1 Land off Bettisfield

Date: 25 May 2023	Weather conditions: Dry/Sunny				Torching visibility: Fair			
	Air temp.: 21 °C				No. bottle traps set: 0			
Bottle Traps	♀		♂		Unsexed		Total	
Great crested newt	0		0		0		0	
Smooth newt	0		0		0		0	
Palmate newt	0		0		0		0	
Other								
Netting	♀	♂	Unsexed	♀	♂	Unsexed	Total	Total
Great crested newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smooth newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palmate newt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other								
	Great crested newt (<i>T. cristatus</i>)			Smooth/palmate newt (<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i> /L. <i>helveticus</i>)			Other	
Ova (presence/absence)	No.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Torching	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments	Highly vegetated with grasses with a maximum depth of 3 inches							

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Scott Latham - Senior Ecologist

Scott has extensive experience and over a decade's expertise in professional ecological consultancy, built on a lifetime's involvement in a range of environmental science and natural history subjects both in the UK and overseas (Sri Lanka, Uganda, South Africa, the USA and several continental European countries). His career has included species reintroduction, human-wildlife conflict resolution and legally protected species work under licence. Scott is practised in GIS, EIA, wildlife law, animal behaviour, ornithology, entomology and a range of applied ecological topics as well as project management and planning. He is also Chair of the Staffordshire Squirrel Project and is involved in various Professional Institute initiatives.

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