



Elite Ecology

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**Oakfields,
Isycoed**



Amphibian Method Statement

October 2022



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0. Executive Summary

This report has been prepared at the request of Ms. Clare Callander (proprietor). It relates to the potential presence of great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and other amphibians at the proposed works site located at Oakfields, Isycoed, Clwyd, LL13 9RY (Central OS Grid Reference: SJ 40089 50110).

Under the current proposals, the outbuilding and detached garage are to be demolished. A two-storey side extension and new detached garage are also proposed.

Based on the information gathered, the proposed scheme of works would be of a **low** permanent impact on the local amphibian populations during the construction and operation phase. This is because the terrestrial habitats at the site contain limited potential to support a variety of amphibians during their terrestrial phase. The property will be extended, and the new garage erected on the amenity grassland present onsite, which is of limited value to the local amphibian populations.

Please refer to **section 5** for the recommendations for this project, including the method statement to be adhered to.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Report Rationale

This report has been prepared at the request of Ms. Clare Callander (proprietor). It relates to the proposed re-development site located at Oakfields, Isycoed, Clwyd, LL13 9RY (Central OS Grid Reference: SJ 40089 50110).

This document has been provided relating to the feedback from Mr. Ian Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council), whereby it is stated:

“No part of the development shall commence until a scheme of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) in respect of Great Crested Newts have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in strict accordance with the RAMs as are approved.”

Following this method statement will ensure that the development does not cause harm to any amphibians or their habitats in accordance with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

1.2 Site Description and Works

The site itself is situated within a semi-rural setting within the local government community of Isycoed, Clwyd.

The site contains numerous habitat types. These come in the form of amenity grassland, broadleaf scattered trees, buildings, fence, hard standing ground, and species poor hedgerow. Some of these habitats could be utilised by protected species.

Within the wider landscape, further habitats are present. These come in the form of amenity grassland, arable land, broadleaf scattered trees, buildings (& their associated gardens), pasture, running water, and standing water. The habitats that surround the site also have the potential to be utilised by a variety of protected species.

Under the current proposals, the outbuilding and detached garage are to be demolished. A two-storey side extension and new detached garage are also proposed. These works will result in both the permanent and temporary loss and/or alteration of some of the habitats located on the proposed redevelopment site.

Figure 1: An aerial map showing the location of the site at Oakfields, Isycoed (as shown by the yellow star) in relation to some of the local landscape.



Figure 2: An OS map obtained from the OS Maps website showing the location of Oakfields, Isycoed (yellow star).



2. Desktop Study

No ecological data had been provided at the time of writing this report as Elite Ecology only ordered data for the bat surveys.

Within a 500m radius, seventeen ponds have been identified (as shown in **Figure 3**).

Figure 3: An aerial map of the proposed site (outlined in red) showing the locations of the ponds within 500m of the site (outlined in orange).



No surveys were undertaken on these waterbodies to determine whether amphibians are present due to it being outside of the amphibian breeding season (mid-April to mid-July).

3. Field Survey

The site was scoped during the activity surveys undertaken at Oakfields, Isycoed, by Elite Ecology. During this, five habitat types were revealed. These are as follows:

- **A3.1** – Broadleaf Scattered Trees
- **J1.2** – Amenity Grassland
- **J2.1.2** – Species Poor Hedgerow
- **J2.4** – Fence
- **J3.6** – Buildings
- **J4** – Hard Standing Ground

Some of these habitats were deemed to be of value to protected species. It was reported that the habitat mosaics at the site are conducive for the local amphibian populations. Therefore, it was deemed conceivable that some amphibians may be present on the site. The habitats adjacent to the site are also deemed suitable for utilisation by the local amphibian populations.

An updated site walkover, conducted on Tuesday 27th September 2022 showed works had already commenced prior to the production of this document.

4. Impact Assessment

Based on the information gathered, the proposed scheme of works at Oakfields, Isycoed, will have a **low** impact on the local amphibian populations during the construction phase. This is because the terrestrial habitats at the site contain limited potential to support a variety of amphibians during their terrestrial phase. The property will be extended, and the new garage erected on the amenity grassland present onsite, which is of limited value to the local amphibian populations.

The proposed scheme of works will cause permanent disturbance to the habitats during the construction phase and operational phase. As the works area (the site where the construction will take place and the material storage area) has limited potential to support great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and other amphibians, a method statement (as outlined in **Section 5**) is necessary for the site. This is to ensure that no individual newts or amphibians get harmed by the works.

Should the method statement be strictly adhered to, then no detriment to the local great crested newt and other amphibian populations will occur by the works.

5. Recommendations

Based on the desktop and field studies, there is a **low** potential for amphibians to be encountered during the scheme of works. Therefore, it has been deemed that the proposed works will have a **low** permanent impact upon great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*).

Therefore, the method statement (as outlined below) is deemed the most suitable option for this project. This method statement needs to be adhered to ensure that no amphibians get harmed by the works.

The following methods should be adhered to:

- On day one of the works, a toolbox talk will be undertaken by a licenced great crested newt ecologist. This will educate contractors in relation to the amphibians that could be encountered and the legislation covering them. Associated documentation will be left with the site manager/project manager. This documentation will include contact details for Elite Ecology and the licenced ecologist appointed to the project.
- Prior to the commencement of the construction works, a fingertip search of the area will be undertaken by a licenced great crested newt ecologist. Any unprotected amphibians found will be collected and translocated to suitable nearby habitat (as shown in **Figure 4**). This translocation site has been selected as the area contains suitable terrestrial and aquatic habitat. The overnight temperature before this fingertip search is required to be 5°C or higher. This is to ensure that no hibernating amphibians are affected by the works and therefore put at undue risk by translocation.
- At the end of every working day, all construction materials need to be stored on raised platforms (i.e., pallets). This is to deter the amphibians from using the construction materials as temporary resting sites. If any amphibians are found within trenches dug into the ground, the licenced ecologist shall be contacted, and these amphibians translocated to the chosen site. In addition to this, if any great crested newts are found during the construction phase, then works will stop immediately and the licenced ecologist contacted.
- The works should also be undertaken when any local great crested newt populations are likely to be within their breeding. Therefore, vegetation removal should be undertaken in late February. Following the reduction in habitat quality (as described below), the ground works themselves should then be undertaken between April and June.
- **Vegetation Removal:** Vegetation should be removed in a controlled way to reduce the sward height to ensure that any amphibians present are encouraged to naturally disperse. Natural England Great Crested Newt Guidance states that vegetation is lowered to a sward height of 15cm to minimise the chance of killing newts.
- **Refugia:** All log piles, stone piles or rubbish is required to be removed by hand. This is due to these features being used as refugia by the local amphibian populations.
- **Lawn Preparation:** Hand tools should be used to strip the area of land from all remaining vegetation where lawn is set to be created. This vegetation should be left at the side to allow any animals to naturally escape of their own accord. Turf should then be laid on the same day.

All of the above processes should be undertaken under site supervision by a licenced ecologist. This is to ensure that no great crested newts or other amphibians are present here.

At the completion of the works, Elite Ecology will produce a letter statement to detail all amphibians captured and translocated. This will include photographic evidence of the works, the amphibians translocated and the site at the completion of the works.

Please note: If any great crested newts are encountered during the above methods, then works need to cease, with both the Local Planning Authority and Natural England contacted for more information.

Figure 4: An aerial image of the proposed works area (yellow star) and the proposed translocation site (blue star).



6. References

Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010). Reptile Habitat Management Handbook. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.

FROGLIFE (1999) Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife, Halesworth

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2003) Herpetofauna Workers' Manual.

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., and Foster, J.P. (2001), Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook, Froglife, Halesworth

The European Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. HMSO.

Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

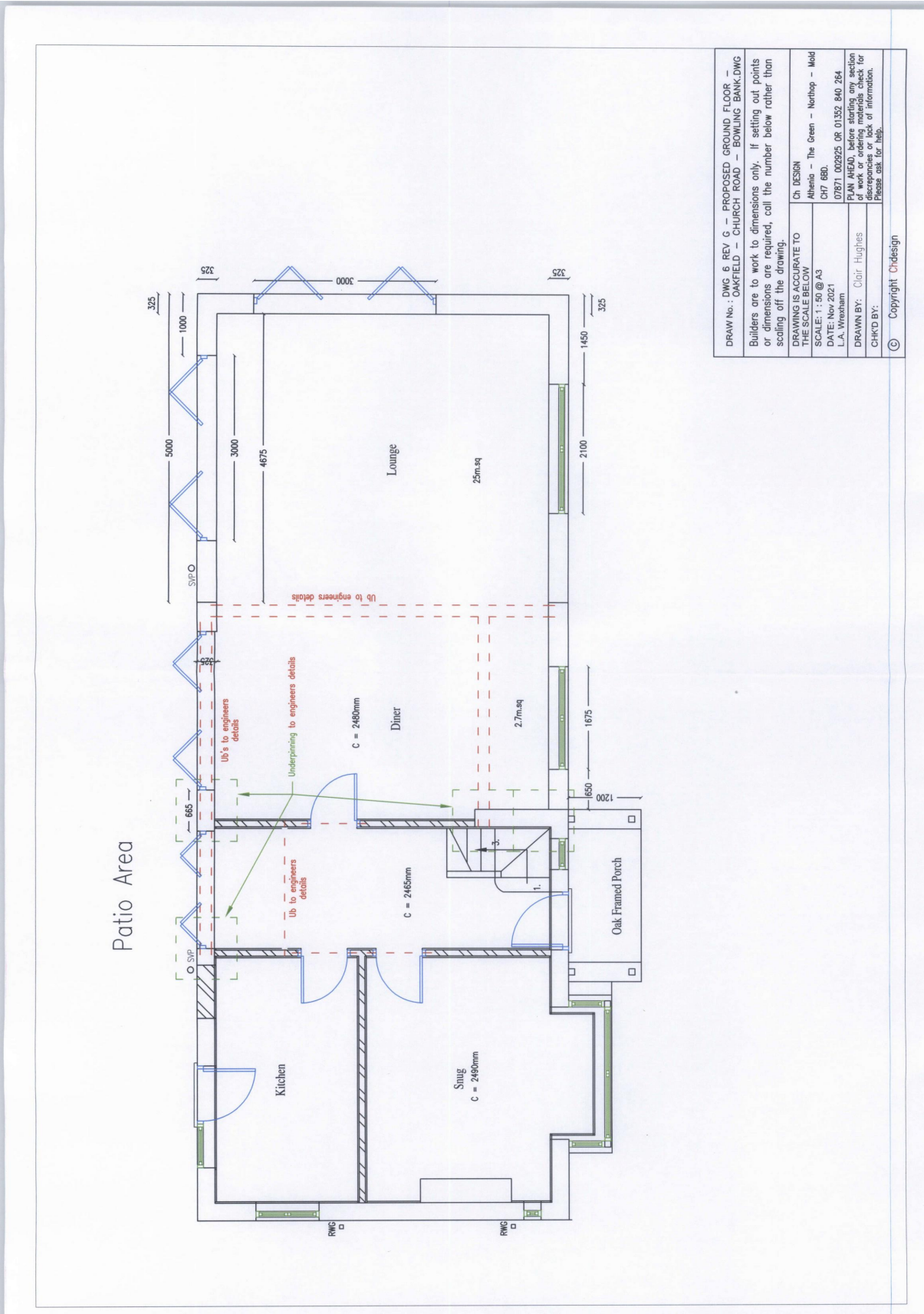
Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000)

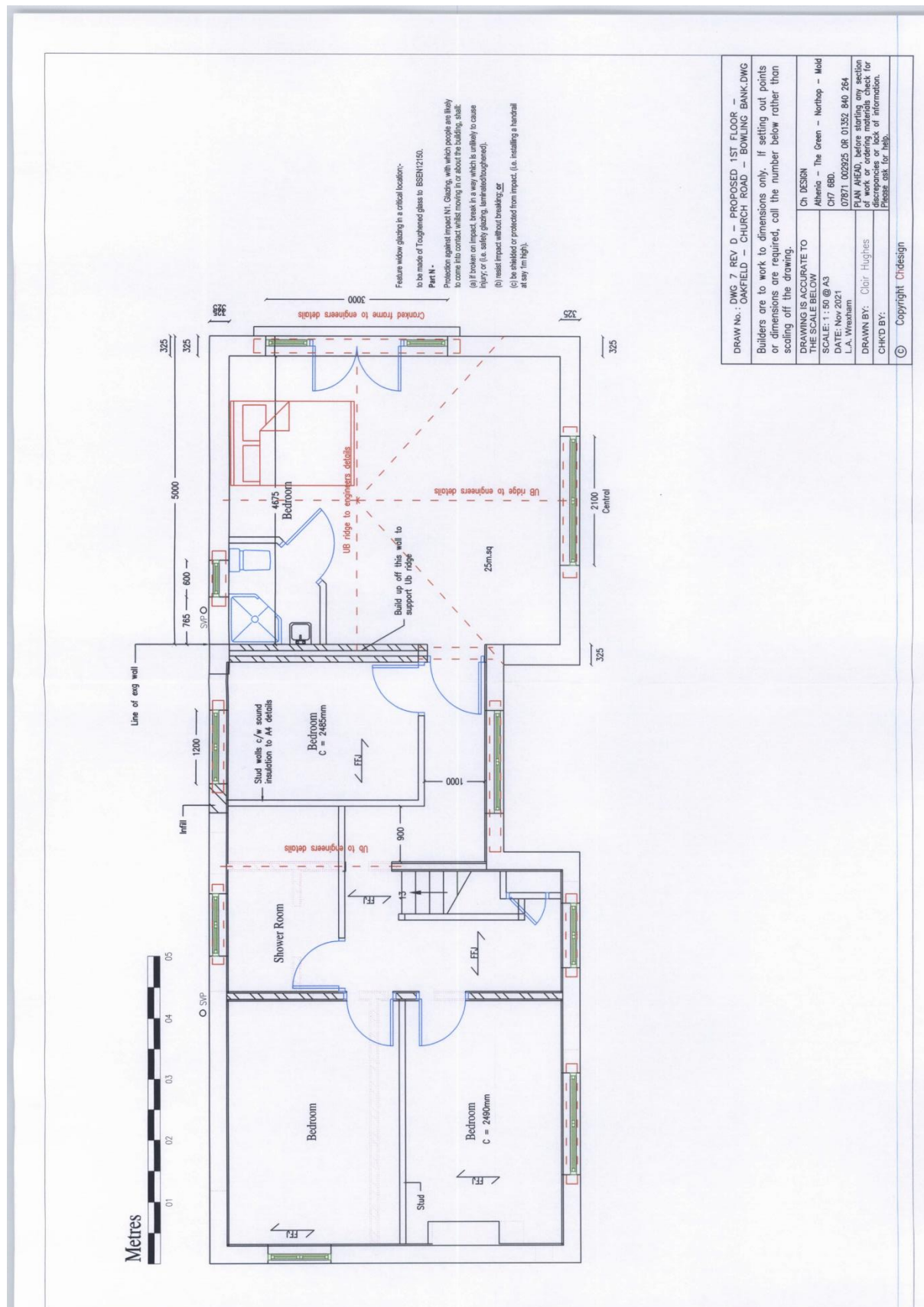
7. Appendices

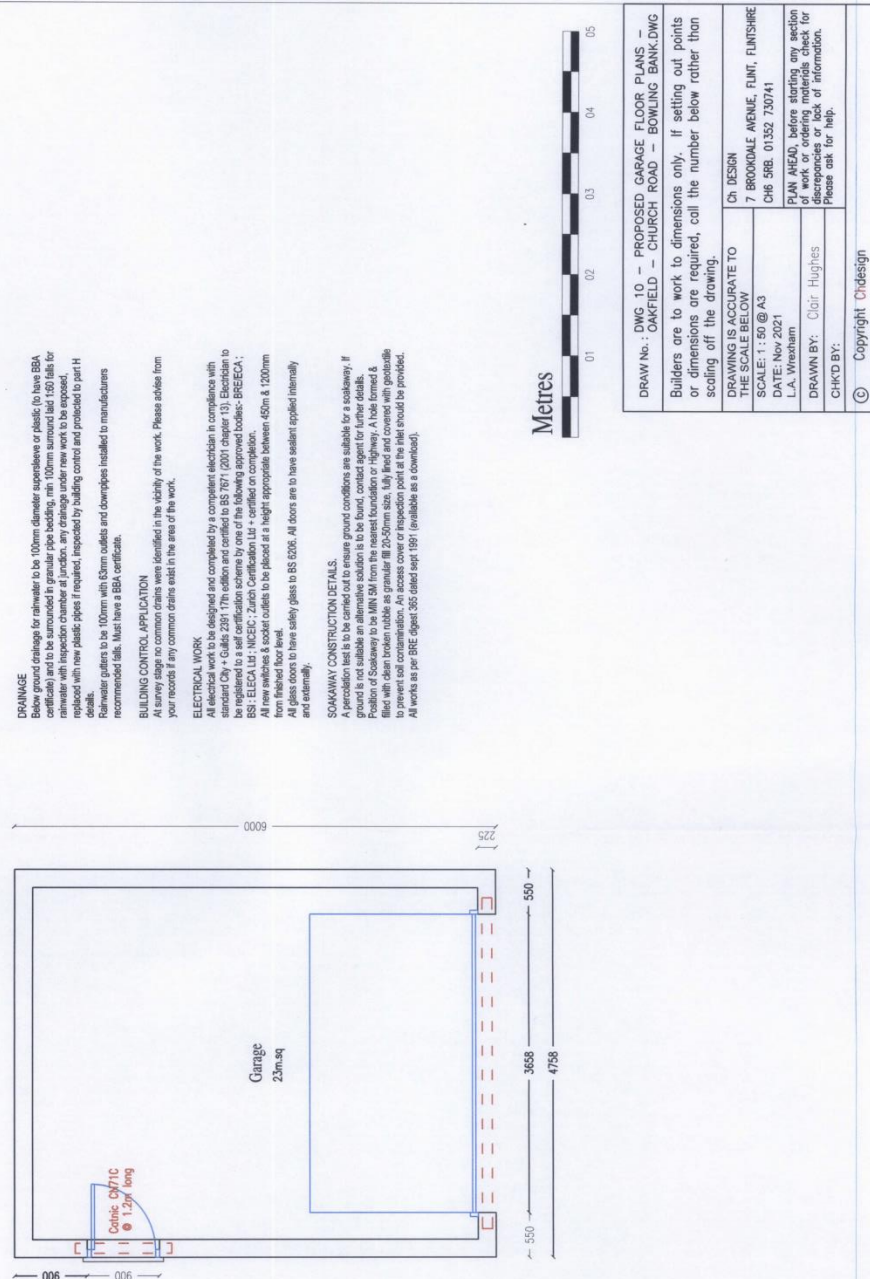
Appendix A: Site Plans

Appendix B: Legislation and Policy

Appendix A: Site Plans







Appendix B: Legislation and Policy

Amphibians:

All amphibians are listed under schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with some species afforded additional protection depending on their rarity and conservation importance.

Great Crested Newt: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Please see below for this species' additional legislation.

Pool Frog: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Natterjack Toad: This species is afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, whilst also being listed on the Habitats Directive (annex IV) and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP).

This means that the aforementioned species are protected from deliberate disturbance, killing, injury or capture. The legislation also protects the habitats in which they live, to prevent them from being damaged or destroyed. Any activity involving disturbance or damage to habitats utilised by these species needs a development licence from Natural England.

Common Frog: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Common Toad: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Palmate Newt: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Smooth Newt: This species is partially protected section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This means that these species are protected from sale only but should be considered as a material consideration if the proposed development works on a site could negatively impact upon these populations.

8. Notice to Readers: Conditions of this Report

All reports are certified products and cannot be shown, copied, or distributed to third parties without the written permission of Elite Ecology. No liability is accepted for the contents of the report, other than to that of the client(s).

Elite Ecology agrees to supply ecological consulting services and advice of a preliminary or thorough nature as advised or commissioned. Upon commissioning Elite Ecology to undertake the work, the client(s) grant access to the site upon the agreed date. If no site access is available upon this date, Elite Ecology holds the right to charge the client(s) for lost staffing time and additional travel costs.

Elite Ecology undertake all site surveys with reasonable skill, care, and diligence, within the terms of the contract that has been agreed with the client and abiding by Elite Ecology's Terms and Conditions. The actions of the surveyors on site, and during the production of the report, were undertaken in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct for the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

The latest good practice guidelines put in place by Natural England or the relevant statutory conservation bodies have been followed by the surveyors on site. If those methodologies fail to identify a protected species during the survey efforts, no responsibility can be attributed to Elite Ecology. If any of these guidelines are adapted between the date(s) of the surveys being undertaken and the submission of this report, then Elite Ecology takes no responsibility for this.

Should any equipment be damaged or lost on site at the fault of the client(s), then Elite Ecology withholds the right to charge 100% above the current market value for that exact product or the nearest similar product.

The survey results purport the current status of the site and its potential for protected species utilisation at the time of surveying. It should not be viewed as a complete list of the possible flora and fauna species that could be using the site at different times of the year.

Elite Ecology has been provided with full payment for this report and thus the product has been released to the client(s) for the purpose of their planning application. If any part of the report is lost or altered without the written permission of Elite Ecology, then the entire report becomes invalid. Due to the potential for continual change within the natural world, this report is valid for **2 years only** from the date of the last survey visit. If this report is submitted after the 2-year deadline, then a further updated inspection will be required to ascertain whether the site remains in the same condition as it was when initially inspected.

No reliance should be made on any such comments in relation to the structural integrity of the features located on the surveyed site. All information within the report is based solely on evidence that has been found on site during the service provided. No individual opinion or inference will be made other than that of the suitably qualified ecologist appointed to the project.