

Proposed Dwelling Black Rock Farm, Cross Lanes, Wrexham

GCN Mitigation Strategy

Introduction

Background

Etive Ecology Ltd was commissioned by N&K Elliott of Black Rock Farm to prepare a GCN Mitigation Strategy in relation to their application for outline planning permission on site. The application is for the construction of a single dwelling for an agricultural worker (P/2020/0011). The application site is located at Black Rock Farm, Sesswick Way, Cross Lanes, Wrexham (OS Grid Reference SJ 37334 47434).

A GCN license (S086710/2) was obtained by N&K Elliott which expires 31st July 2047. This license covered the loss, mitigation, and compensation of GCN aquatic and terrestrial habitats associated with the construction of two poultry sheds and access points. The GCN license is still active for the site, with all mitigation and compensation works completed. Habitat management and monitoring is ongoing.

Both a desk study and survey data provided by Bowland Ecology identified that a medium sized meta population of GCN's is present within the area, due to the mosaic of suitable terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The 2015 presence/absence survey found that the five ponds in close proximity to the red line site boundary all support GCN. The pond located approximately 25m northeast of the survey also had excellent suitability indicated by the score of 0.86 on the Habitat Suitability Survey.

Subsequent GCN monitoring surveys have been undertaken by Holding Habitats, who maintain the site under the existing license. These surveys have focused on the newly created ponds on the poultry farm site and have confirmed that GCN are present within these ponds in small numbers.

Scope of This Document

This Mitigation Strategy outlines the likely impacts on the local GCN population from the proposed development outlined in P/2020/001. The document also proposes mitigation and compensation strategies for the population affected in this development, which would be incorporated into the current GCN license upon planning approval.

The proposed development is located off Sesswick Way, Wrexham, and consists of a singular dwelling used for an agricultural worker in the centre of the western field within the site ownership boundary.

Impacts on GCN

The following impacts on GCN have been identified in relation to the proposed development:

Short-Term Impacts

The following short-term impacts on the local GCN population have been identified, prior to any mitigation or compensation measures;

- Killing, injuring or disturbance of any GCN present within the development footprint at the time of construction works.
- Temporary disturbance and damage to 0.05ha of suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN during construction works.
- Accidental pollution of the adjacent GCN pond during construction works.
- Restrictions on GCN dispersal throughout the site during construction works.
- Introduction of potential amphibian pathogens or other INNS during the construction phase.

Long-Term Impacts

The following long-term impacts on the local GCN population have been identified, prior to any mitigation or compensation measures;

- Permanent loss of 0.05ha of suitable terrestrial habitat where the residential dwelling and access track are to be located.
- Risk of degradation through human disturbance or accidental pollution of the adjacent GCN pond.
- Introduction of potential amphibian pathogens or other INNS during the occupational phase.

Although no ponds will be directly affected by the proposed development, the proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 0.1 hectares (ha) of suitable terrestrial GCN habitat, all of which is located within 100m of known GCN ponds.

There are not considered to be any long-term impacts on GCN populations within the wider landscape (up to 10km) to the proposed development. Impacts are anticipated to be potentially significant at the site level only.

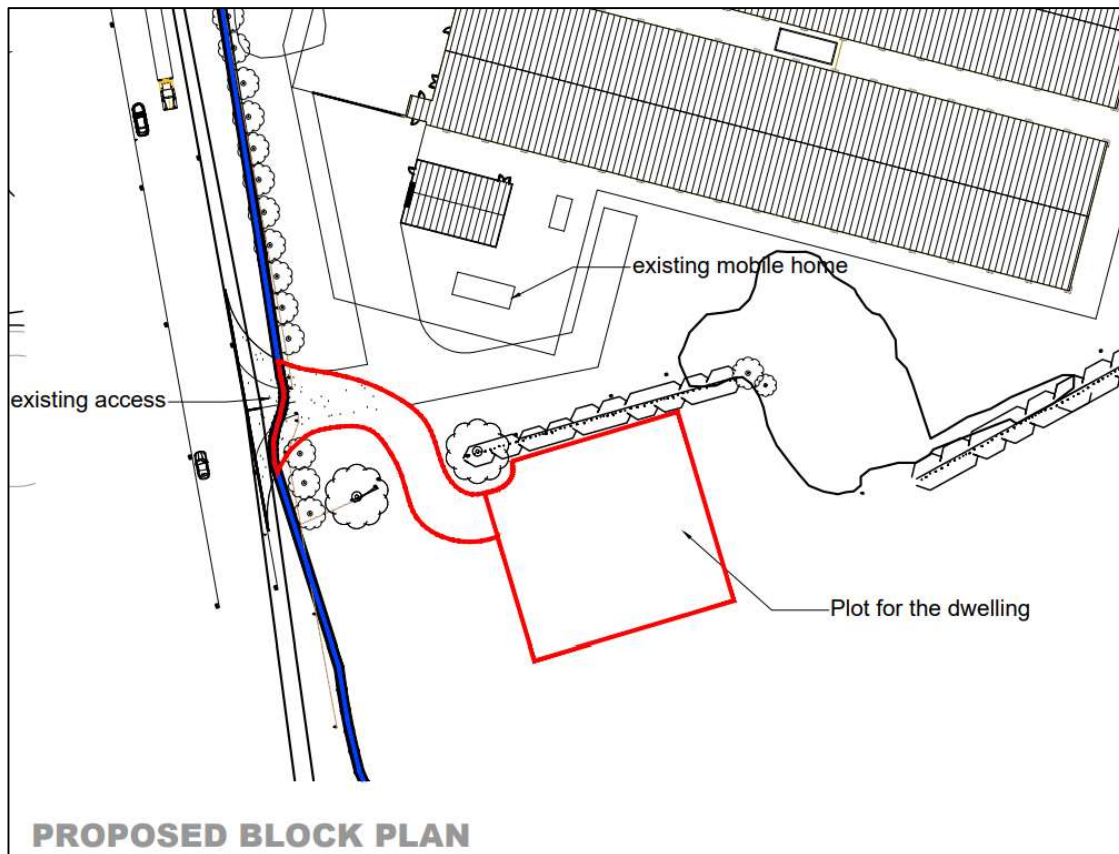
There are not considered to be any significant permanent risks of fragmentation or isolation of the site's GCN population due to the proposed development.

Mitigation Strategy

The proposed mitigation strategy will follow the GCN Mitigation Guidelines and will comprise the trapping and translocation of GCN from the development footprint. This process is described as follows and is illustrated below:

- Install GCN barrier fencing around the perimeter of the red line planning application site boundary, as shown on the plan below.
- Install pitfall traps and artificial refugia every alternate 10m along the inside of the fence.

- Install a GCN grid at the site entrance or turn back the fence lines along the main road for a minimum of 3m, to prevent GCN from accessing the site whilst also maintaining vehicle access.
- Undertake a minimum of 30 days pitfall trapping during suitable weather conditions and outside of the hibernation period.
- Pitfall trapping can cease after the minimum period is completed, provided at least 5 consecutive days of non-capture have been recorded. Pitfall traps will be closed and/or removed and backfilled.
- Construction work will commence within the fenced area. No construction works will be permitted outside of the fenced area.
- The perimeter GCN fence will be inspected regularly to ensure there is no damage and that it continues to serve as a barrier to GCN movement.
- Upon completion of all development works, the GCN barrier fence will be removed under ecological supervision and outside of the hibernation period.



The detailed design of the development will include measures to prevent accidental harm to GCN. For example, drainage design will ensure that there are no gulley pots that GCN may fall into and become trapped within. Depending on the landscape proposals, it may be preferable for garden fencing to be installed that serves as a permanent barrier to GCN, which may reduce the risk of harm and disturbance from the residential use of the new development.

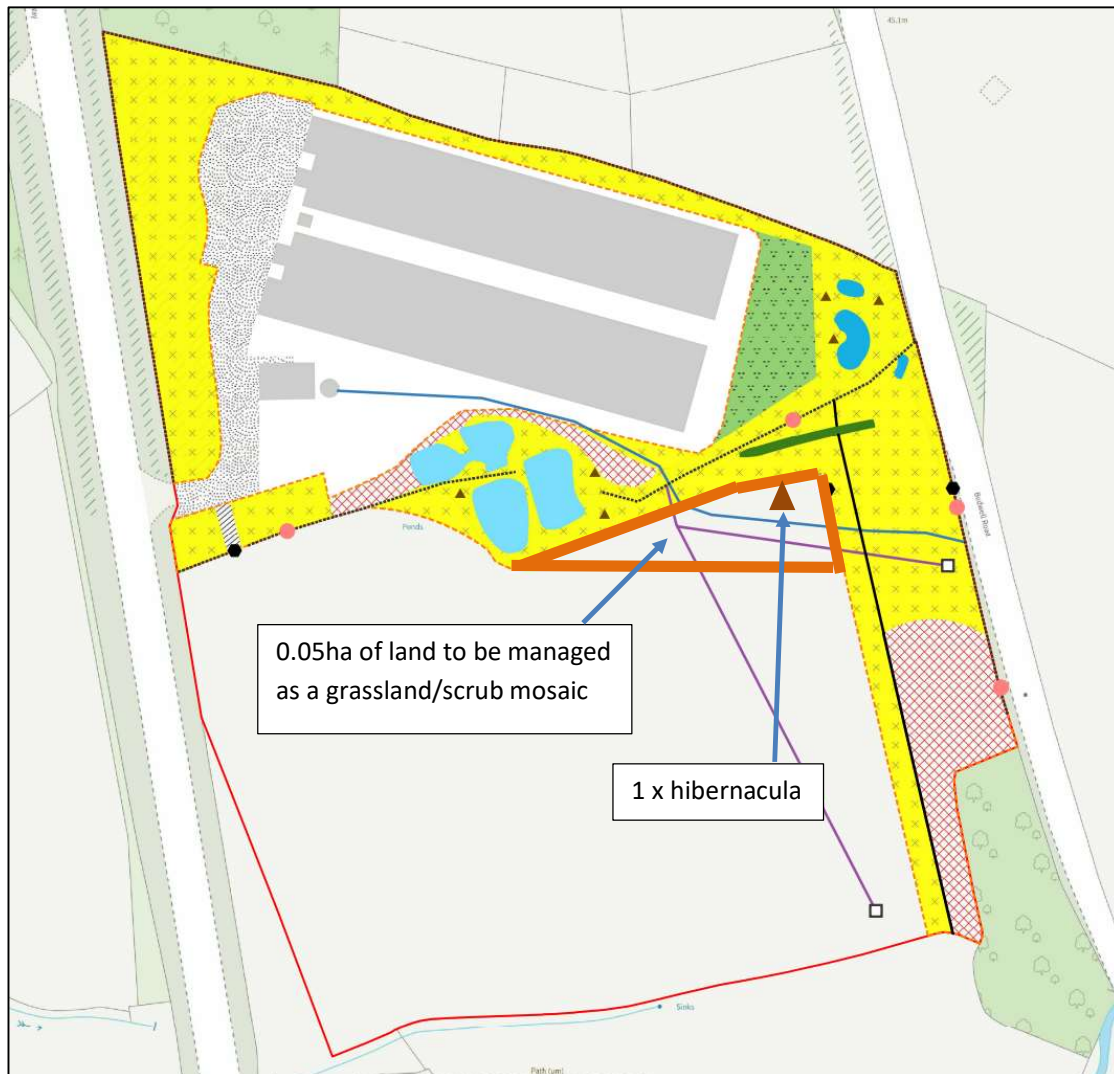
All vehicles accessing the site will be subject to best practise measures for biosecurity, including wheel washes and decontamination prior to entry. This will ensure that no amphibian pathogens or INNS are accidentally introduced to the site. A Biosecurity Risk Assessment would be prepared and submitted along with the GCN License revision.

During construction, no activities will be permitted within 5m of the GCN pond. It is anticipated that the GCN fence will also serve as a barrier to any accidental pollution incidents that may occur during construction. Spill kits will be kept on site and best practise pollution prevention measures will be followed by all construction site contractors.

If implemented in full, this mitigation strategy will avoid many of the short-term risks posed to GCN as identified herein. Where avoidance is not possible, the mitigation strategy will minimise the risk of these impacts occurring and/or the magnitude of their effects on GCN and/or GCN habitat.

Compensation

The proposed compensation measures will follow the guidance provided by NRW and Wrexham CBC and will comprise the long-term conservation management of an area of land 50% the size of the development footprint. It is noted that the application site is ~0.1ha in size, therefore a 0.05ha area of habitat has been identified as GCN compensatory habitat, as shown on the site plan below.



The proposed area of GCN habitat to the south and east of the existing GCN pond in the centre of the Black Rock Farm site. This area has been chosen due to the close proximity to the GCN breeding pond and to other areas of existing habitat under management for GCN. The area will connect directly into existing scrub/grassland mosaic, hedgerows and a butterfly bund. A new hibernaculum will also be created in the northern edge of this new area of habitat.

Management, Monitoring & Maintenance

To ensure the long-term site security and appropriate management/maintenance of the compensatory habitat describe above, the proposed compensation measures detailed above will be managed in line with the existing Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the existing GCN license. This HMP document would be updated to reflect the additional areas for management as part of the GCN License revision, following any planning approval.

Monitoring of the compensatory terrestrial habitat will be undertaken, in line with the existing monitoring arrangements in the GCN License. All ponds will continue to be monitored for GCN presence/absence and results added to the Wales GCN Monitoring Scheme.

The additional areas of habitat would be maintained by Holding Habitats, as per the existing areas of GCN compensatory habitat. The lease agreement between Holding Habitats and the Licensee would be revised following any planning approval.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed mitigation strategy detailed herein, identifies the key risks posed to GCN and appropriate measures to avoid, mitigate and compensate for these impacts.

Provided the measures described herein are implemented in full, there should be no adverse impact on the long-term Favourable Conservation Status of GCN at the site or Local scales.

Upon grant of planning permission for this proposed development, the existing GCN License for Black Rock Farm would be updated to include the measures detailed herein.

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Approved by: Russell Grey

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