

SITE DEVELOPMENT and GCN CONSERVATION PLAN

Construction of Stables block and floodlit Manège at:
Caretaker House, Hafod Road, Wrexham. LL14 6HF.

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1: INTRODUCTION

1. Pearce Environment Ltd. were appointed to conduct a survey and produce a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Report to accompany a Planning Application for the proposed construction of a Stables block to include 3No. Individual stables, tack room and solarium/wash box and outdoor floodlit riding arena all for the personal use of the applicant. The applicant is Ms. Nicola Selvey who resides in the adjacent property, Caretaker House.
2. The Report concluded that the land forming the development footprint is considered to have 'LOW' potential for Great Crested Newts to be present and that no direct impact upon the neighbouring Johnstown Newt Sites / Bonc-Yr-Hafod Country Park SSSI habitats which are outside of the development site.
3. The Report concluded that no further Great Crested Newt surveys are necessary. No evidence of other protected / notable species was noted during the survey and no adverse impact upon species or habitats of ecological importance is envisaged.
4. With regard to Biosecurity the Report concluded that no Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) were identified on or adjacent to the site.
5. Since the December 2019 HSI report site conditions have not changed with regards to great crested newt.
6. Given the above it is considered reasonably unlikely that an offence would be committed under the relevant conservation legislation in undertaking these works and therefore an EPS Licence is not necessary. Nevertheless works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the GCN mitigation statement and in the unlikely event that Great Crested Newts are encountered on the site all works will cease and further advice will be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

2: OBJECTIVES.

1. The objectives of this plan are to conduct the proposed development without committing an offence under the legislation.
2. To ensure that favourable conservation status of great crested newts (GCN) is maintained.
3. To reduce any potential risk to great crested newt and other amphibians/reptiles during the proposed works.
4. Work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with this Site and Conservation Plan.

3: LEGISLATION.

1. The great crested newt (GCN) is listed as a European Protected Species (EPS) under schedule 2 of the Conservation Regulations and is afforded full protection under both Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Furthermore, GCN's are listed Priority Species on the UK BAP, highlighting them as species of conservation concern and affording them a high level of protection under these regulations.

4: HABITAT SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT.

1. The survey of 2019 has determined the suitability for GCN within the development footprint itself is considered sub-optimal overall.

2. The survey of 2019 has determined there to be below average suitability for GCN with regards to the pond WB1 located 140 metres at it's nearest point from the development site.

5: RISK ASSESSMENT.

1. The development footprint comprises horse-grazed pasture of species-poor improved grassland, which is grazed by horses to a short sward height. The suitability of the terrestrial habitat for GCN within the development footprint itself is considered to be sub-optimal overall.
2. There are deemed to be no significant terrestrial hibernation opportunities within the development footprint.
3. No potential artificial refugia are present on the site itself.
4. The site is considered to provide limited terrestrial opportunities for feeding and/or commuting, limited to the small strips of tall-sward vegetation.
5. The levels of disturbance on the site and immediate surrounds are currently high due to its historic and current use for horse grazing.
6. A pond situated some 140 metres to the south of the site referred to as WB1 is medium sized and considered a potential significant water body within a 250 metre zone of influence of the development footprint and under control of the applicant.
7. A Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newts was run for WB1 and provided a below average suitability for great crested newts.
8. There are no anticipated negative impacts upon any breeding place of GCN, there are no anticipated negative impacts upon any core habitat, there is no anticipated temporary or permanent loss of any viable GCN/amphibian hibernation habitat as a result of the proposals. Long term fragmentation/isolation as a result of the proposals is not anticipated. There is low risk of killing/injuring/disturbing GCN and any other amphibian species potentially commuting across the site during work phase.
9. The land directly within the development footprint is not considered to form part of a great crested newt breeding/hibernation site.
10. Reasonable avoidance measures have been outlined below to further minimise any potential risk associated with the proposed development for great crested newts and other amphibians.
11. It is considered, in the HSI report, that all species of amphibian recorded within the Johnstown Newt Sites SAC/Bonc-Yr-Hafod Country Park SSSI will be protected and will benefit from the prescribed mitigation and enhancement strategy contained herein.

6: HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN.

1. The pond WB1 does not form part of the development footprint and other than recommended enhancement measures will remain outside of the proposed development works.
2. The existing function of horse stable and associated paddock will continue and therefore the aim of the management proposals will be to retain the existing ecological function of the key habitat, WB1, through

enhancement measures given below and security of the development footprint during the course of the development works.

3. Ongoing management and monitoring will be carried out by maintaining annual inspections carried out by a qualified ecological officer to record any changes to the baseline conditions.
4. Every morning prior to commencement of the days work a pre-works site inspection of the site, in particular the line of newt fencing, will be carried out by the designated ecological compliance officer.
5. Cutting of the grass surrounding WB1 will be carried out annually during the summer and reduced to a height of 150mm.
6. The generated report and recommendations from the annual inspections will be forwarded to Wrexham Council Ecological and Biodiversity Officer. The report will include, but not be confined to, the following;
Identification of species present

Recommendation with regards to features existing and recommended

Address new potential threats

Recommendations with regards to habitat improvement
7. If at any time between annual inspections it is thought that an offence may be likely to be committed under the relevant conservation legislation then the qualified ecological officer will be contacted and the relevant licence applied for if deemed necessary.
8. If the works are to be carried out outside of the winter months then all of the works will be carried out under the supervision of a licenced ECW.

7: REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES

1. The following sets out a protocol of reasonable avoidance/precautionary measures for ensuring that there is negligible risk of killing, injuring or disturbing great crested newt or of damaging or disturbing a resting or sheltering place used by great crested newt or other amphibians which might be in the vicinity of the proposed development.
2. It is not deemed practical or necessary to erect any form of fencing around the proposed working area, nevertheless if the works are carried out outside of the inactive hibernation period, a temporary newt fence of *Caudon* or similar 1000 gauge polythene will be erected around the working area, as shown in red on the site plan, fixed with 37×37×1200 mm wooden stakes at 1M centres and sealed at ground level with earth. Similarly fencing will be erected around the pond, WB1, whilst enhancement measures are carried out. See 19: FENCE DETAIL below.
3. The grassland predominating the site shall be retained at a short sward height during the works to ensure the site remains unfavourable for Great Crested Newts / amphibians.
4. No standing water is to be allowed to persist on the site.
5. Every morning prior to commencement of the days work a pre-works site inspection of the site, in particular the line of newt fencing, will be carried out by the designated ecological compliance officer.

6. An induction talk will be given to all personnel who will be working on the site to make them aware of the potential presence of Great Crested Newts on the site and their status as a protected species. The induction talk will include reference to biosecurity protocol with regards to great crested newts.
7. A laminated copy of the HSI report prepared by Pearce Environment Ltd. And of this Development plan shall be kept on site during the works, with all operatives attending the site made aware of these and their content.
8. If any building material has to be stored on the site it must be raised from the ground on pallets, trailers or the like.
9. Any trenches or holes will not be left open overnight but will be backfilled or covered and sealed. They will be inspected in the morning prior to commencement of work.
10. In the event Great Crested Newts are discovered at any time during the development, all works will immediately cease and an ecological expert consulted for advice.
11. All vehicles and machinery must remain within the concrete hardstanding and gravelled area to the north of the site when not in use.
12. Under no circumstances will waste materials be left on site at the end of each working day.
13. The defined working area is that within the temporary barrier fence as indicated on the site plan.

8: COMPLIANCE

1. Ms Nicola Selvey will be the on site contact with regards to compliance.
2. A day to day record shall be kept of any incidents or sightings relating to amphibians during the course of the works.
3. A suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works will be appointed to undertake pre-commencement site survey.
4. Every morning prior to commencement of the days work a pre-works site inspection of the site, in particular the line of newt fencing, will be carried out by the designated ecological compliance officer. A record will be kept of these daily inspections and included in the information to be forwarded to the local authority Ecological and Biodiversity Officer. The inspections will include, but not be confined to, the following:
 - Observe that site bio-security measures are still in place
 - Confirm fencing is intact and fully functional
 - Log any necessary repairs required to be carried out
 - Observe and log that hibernaculum construction is carried out correctly
 - Observe and log cutting of grass around pond WB1 is carried out as required
 - Observe and log that tree thinning around pond WB1 is carried out as required
5. Monthly visits will be arranged with the Ecological Clerk of Works during the development works to ensure evidence compliance is satisfactory.
6. A compliance report will be compiled by Ms Selvey/the ECW on completion of the works and forwarded to the local authority Ecological and Biodiversity Officer.

9: TIMING OF THE WORKS

1. As development work is to take place within an unsuitable Great Crested Newt habitat and there being no tall-sward vegetation within the development site, no calendar timing restrictions for the works.
2. A Management plan has been drawn up to show the proposed timeline and commencement of various parts of the development process. It is expected that once works commence the project will be completed within one phase in accordance with the Management plan to minimise any impact on amphibian species.
3. A pre-commencement walk over of the site will be carried out by the qualified ecological officer before any access to the site is granted and work allowed to commence.
4. All personnel who require to visit the site will be given a toolbox talk before access is allowed to the site. A record of this induction will be made, signed and dated by all parties. The toolbox talk will be given by the qualified ecological officer.
5. Work will be carried out between 07.30 and 18.00 hrs. Monday to Friday and 08.30 to 14.00 hrs. on Saturdays. No work is to be carried out on a Sunday or Bank Holiday or after sunset.

10: COMPENSATION / MITIGATION

1. The proposal is in an area where there is a 'low' potential for Great Crested Newts to be present and the development will not result in the loss of any habitats, therefore there is no requirement to provide any enhancement above what exists.

11: BIOSECURITY PROTOCOL

1. Amphibians should only be handled when absolutely necessary.
2. Powder free single use vinyl gloves only shall be used when handling amphibians. Gloves should be rinsed before use and changed before handling each individual amphibian.
3. Amphibians should only be released in their place of capture and nowhere else.
4. Treat dead or sick amphibians as a high infection risk, do not handle but contact the ecological contact immediately.

12: DISPERSAL CORRIDORS

1. All works and associated activity is to be confined to the immediate footprint of the site. The hedgerow bordering Hafod Road will remain unaffected and intact.

13: ENHANCEMENT

1. Part of the pond identified as WB1 which lies under Ms Selvey's control will be enhanced by tree thinning as recommended in the Ecology report together with fencing off. The grassland immediately bordering the pond shall be maintained by annual cutting.
2. A hibernaculum will be created adjacent to WB1 in order to increase the ecological value of the retained habitat, utilising cuttings from tree thinning and generally in accordance with recommendation guidelines being 2×1×1 M high, constructed from available rubble, logs, deadwood, rocks and bricks found from within the curtilage of the property.
3. In carrying out the above measures a positive biodiversity net gain will have been achieved and a small increase in the terrestrial quality of the locality.

14: DEVIATION

1. Any deviation from the above measures can only take place following prior approval from the Ecological and Biodiversity Officer of Wrexham County Borough Council.

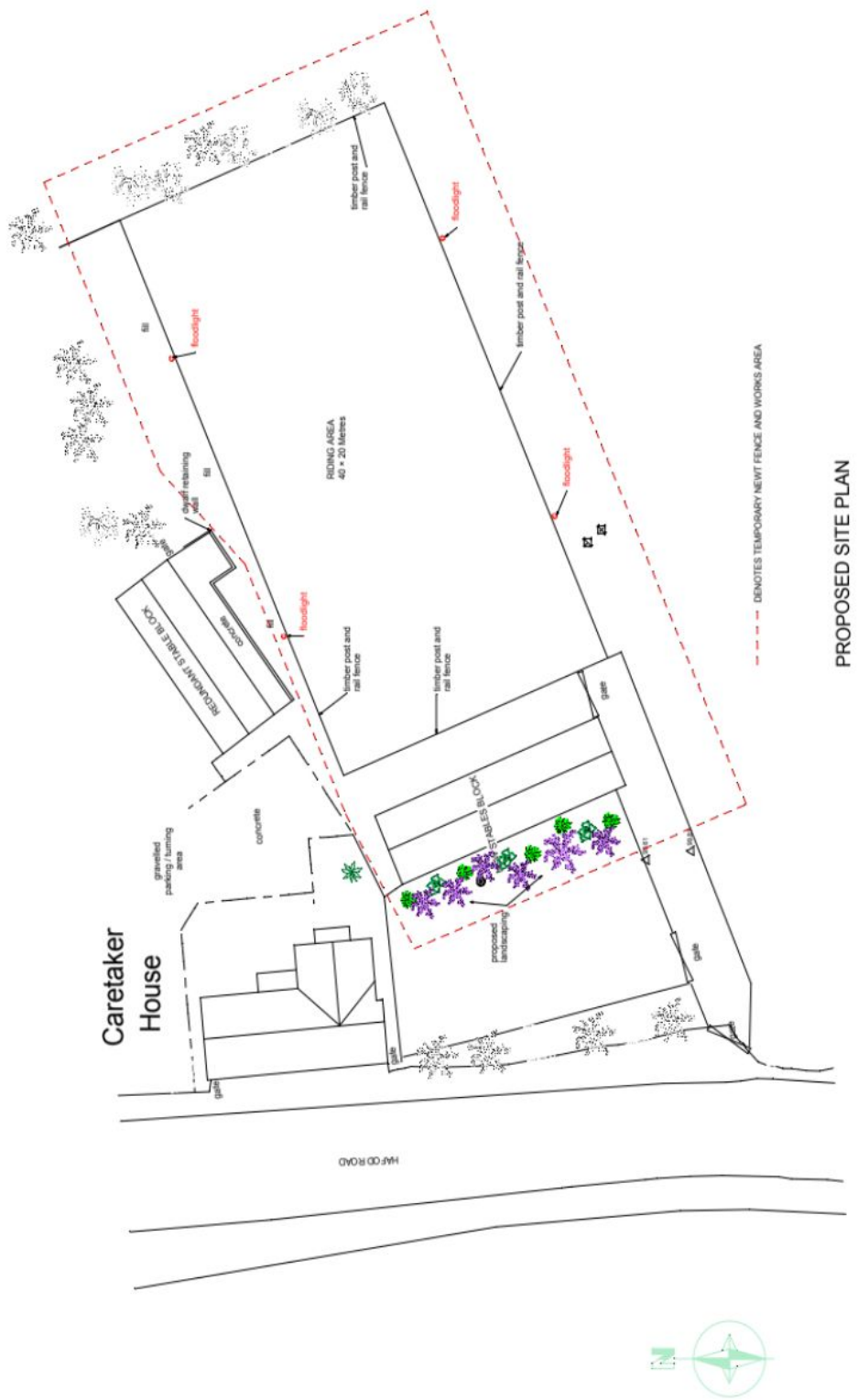
15: LANDSCAPING

1. Planting for screening to the rear of the stable block will be provided where shown on the site plan comprising generally of *Phormium Tenax* (*New Zealand flax*) and *Astelia Chathamica* (*silver bush*). Alternative species may be substituted if recommended so by the Local Authority Ecological and Biodiversity Officer.

16: ARENA LIGHTING

1. Lighting of the arena will be by “bat friendly” asymmetric flood lights mounted on hinged columns positioned as shown on the site plan.
2. Lighting will not be used before 7am. Or after 11pm. In accordance with anti social hours.

17: SITE PLAN



PROPOSED SITE PLAN

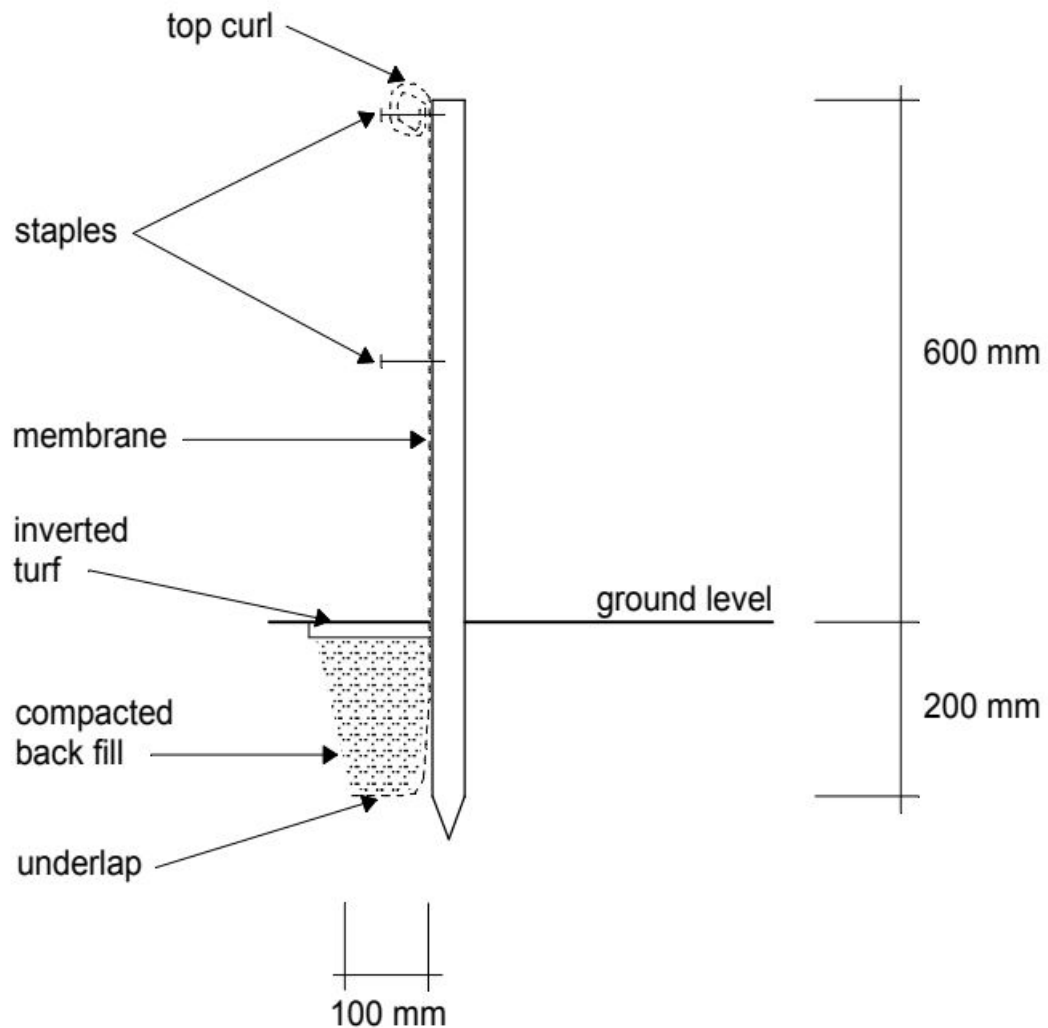
18: MANAGEMENT PLAN

Table 1

[illegible]

19: GCN FENCE DETAIL

GCN FENCE DETAIL



NOTES:

Top curl formed of 200mm length twice folded

1000 gauge membrane (note 1200g Visqueen is not acceptable)

Membrane fixed with clout nails, staples or nails with plastic washers

100mm underlap formed as shown

Backfill and compact underlap and top with inverted turf