

Amphibian Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement



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FIGURE 1: POND SURVEY PLAN

APPENDIX 1: AMPHIBIAN REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Method Statement has been produced in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the barn / outbuildings at Higher Oak, Oak Road, Wrexham.
- 1.1.2 The proposals will include clearance of small section of vegetation comprising hedgerow, trees and scrub to create a new driveway and small extensions to the north of the barn.
- 1.1.3 This Method Statement details Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs), suitable to mitigate any potential effects of construction, in relation to amphibians, including the European Protected Species great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*.
- 1.1.4 Great crested newts and their habitat are fully protected under national *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (Schedule 5) and under Annex II and IV(a) of the *European Habitats Directive*; the species is also included in the *Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010* as this enacts the European legislation as a European Protected Species (EPS). In addition, the great crested newt and common toad *Bufo bufo* are UK BAP Priority Species.

2 ECOLOGICAL BASELINE

- 2.1.1 The barn sits within a domestic setting, located across a small private courtyard from the residential house at Higher Oak. The gardens surrounding Higher Oak are formed by mature trees with the barn itself bordered by trees and dense vegetation on three sides (western, northern and eastern aspects).
- 2.1.2 The wider surrounding landscape supports a mix of agricultural fields which are bordered by hedgerows and trees. The field boundaries provide a network of habitat connectivity linking with areas of scattered broad-leaved woodland. The River Clywedog is located approximately 370m south of Higher Oak which is flanked by bank-side trees.
- 2.1.3 Aerial images have identified five ponds within 250m of the Higher Oak barn (see **Figure 1**) including a small garden pond within the grounds at Higher Oak. The garden pond (Pond 1) is located approximately 20m from the barn. In August 2016 this pond was shaded and had a layer of leaf litter and was considered to be of below average habitat suitability for great crested newts (HSI 0.59).
- 2.1.4 The other ponds were located at distances of 160m (Pond 2), 212m (Pond 3), 215m (Pond 4) and 225m (Pond 5). These ponds were not visited as they are located outside the landownership boundary of the applicant.
- 2.1.5 It is considered likely that great crested newts will be present within the surrounding habitats given the sites location on the outskirts of Wrexham Industrial Estate which is an area known to support great crested newt populations. However, the extent of potential terrestrial habitat associated with the development footprint is very small and any such loss will not affect the great crested population at any level.

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1.1 The objectives of this Method Statement are to:-

- Ensure that construction works can proceed, avoiding any risk of breaching relevant legislation;
- Set out a suitable ecological strategy to be employed during the course of the proposed works, including supervision by an ecologist as required;
- Ensure that the favourable conservation status (FCS) of great crested newt and other amphibian species is maintained;
- Ensure there will be no destruction or damage to any amphibian breeding sites (including from indirect impacts).

3.1.2 The measures set out in this Method Statement will also serve to protect other wildlife potentially present.

4 PROPOSED WORKS METHODOLOGY

4.1 Protection Measures

4.1.1 The following measures are proposed to be adopted throughout the works period:

1. Site operatives will be informed by 'tool box' talk at the start of the works on their ecological responsibilities and what to look out for during works.
2. Prior to works commencing there will be clear delineation of working areas and access routes for machinery and operatives entering. Instructions on adhering to these areas will be given to all staff and subcontractors and it will be the responsibility of the Site manager / Supervisor to enforce these at all times during works. No works will be permitted outside these defined areas.
3. A suitably experienced ecologist will undertake an ecological watching brief during initial vegetation removal and earthworks. The initial works must only occur during periods when overnight temperatures are above 5°C and amphibians are likely to be active.
4. Vegetation works including the removal of woody vegetation, scrub and any tall herbs/grasses within the ground flora will be undertaken under the supervision of a suitably experienced ecologist, using hand tools (e.g. hand held strimmer, loppers, chainsaws etc.) insofar as possible. Vegetation will be cut back in a phased manner and a visual search will be made of all potential areas of shelter by the ecologist. Cut material would be removed immediately from the working area (see Section 4.2).
5. The construction area will be maintained in a condition unattractive to amphibians during the construction period. Should any trenches and excavations be left open overnight, an escape route will be provided. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered. All excavations left open overnight or longer will be checked by a site operative for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. In the event that an amphibian is found, an ecologist will be contacted immediately for advise on the most appropriate course of action.
6. Building materials brought onto Site will be stored off-ground on raised pallets to prevent them becoming temporary refuge for amphibians or other wildlife.
7. If a great crested newt is identified at any stage, works will cease and a licenced ecologist would advise on necessary next steps (including applying for a European Protected Species derogation licence, if necessary) prior to re-commencing work activities. In the event that other amphibian species are found during the works, individuals will be carefully placed in suitable nearby places

of shelter identified by the ecologist. Records will be kept of any animals found and relocated in this way.

4.2 Local habitat enhancement

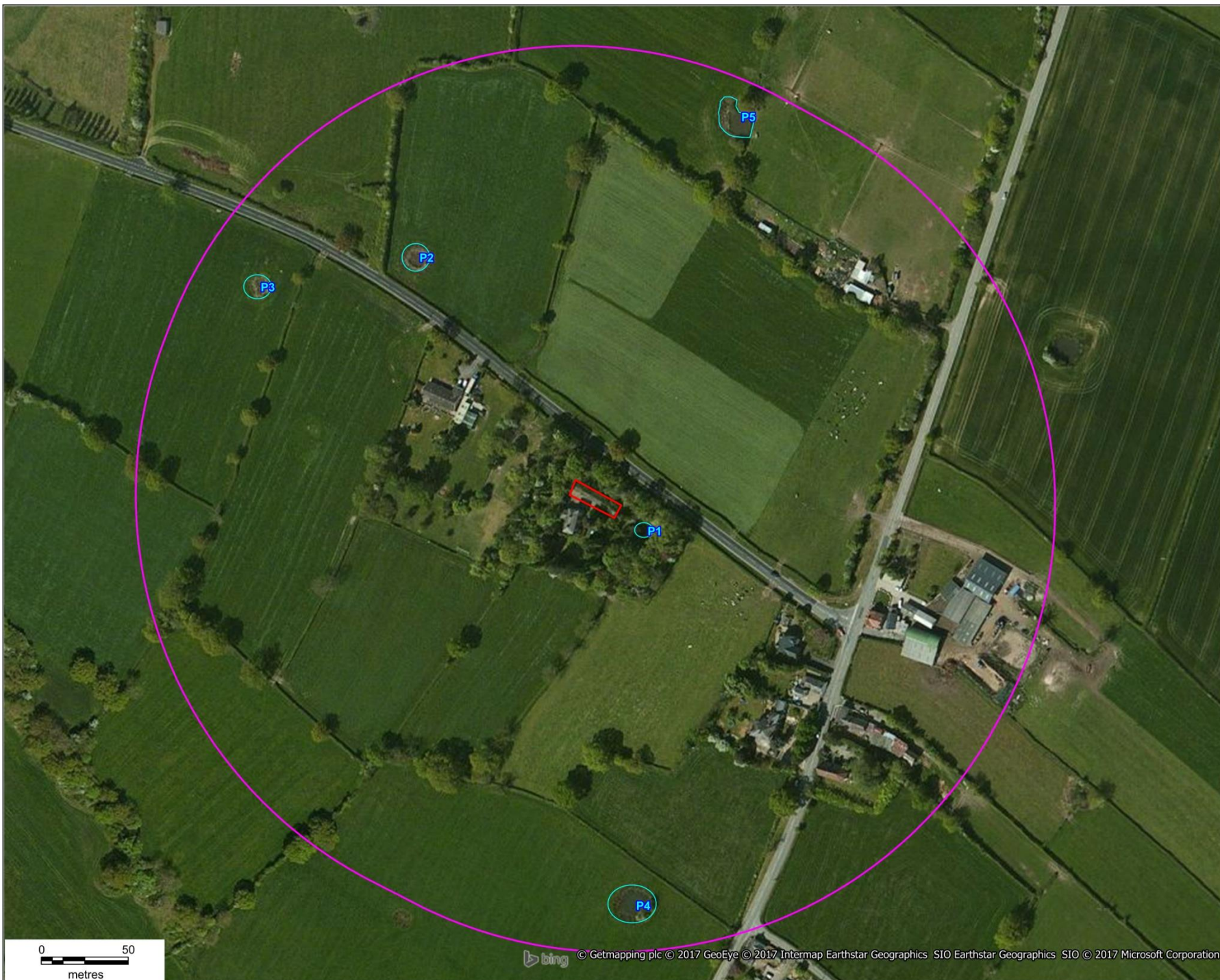
- 4.2.1 Some of the cut logs and brash from vegetation clearance for construction will be arranged in piles near to the development to create new refuge/hibernacula habitat suitable for amphibians and other wildlife.

5 BIOSECURITY MEASURES

- 5.1.1 The following biosecurity measures will be implemented:

- Equipment/vehicles entering Site will be clean and free from plant material or mud etc. from other sites in order to prevent the accidental introduction of invasive species or disease. The site manager will set in place measures to ensure that vehicles and equipment entering or leaving the site are checked and are suitably clean and free from potential sources of contamination;
- Soils or other construction fill materials brought on to site will be certified as free from contaminating elements including for example plant fragments of potentially invasive species such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*;
- No personnel or vehicles will enter the minimum 5m exclusion zone around the pond;
- Disinfectant will be available at the entrance to the site to allow footwear and equipment to be cleaned as necessary (disinfection should comprise soaking in a bleach solution (1 measure of household bleach to 9 measures of water) for 15 minutes, or using Virkon solution (1mg/ml for 1 minute); and
- Any buckets or other carrying receptacles used to move and relocate amphibians (if found) to nearby shelter will likewise be disinfected before and after use.

Figure 1:
Ponds within 250m of Higher Oak Barn



- Legend
- Site boundary
 - 250m buffer
 - Ponds

Higher Oak

Ponds within 250m of the Barn

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