

Discharge of Condition 4

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

METHOD STATEMENT

Application Number: P/2020/0880

WOLVESACRE HALL

For John Clarke

March 2021

Arbor Vitae Environment Ltd

Lower Betton Farm

Cross Houses

Shrewsbury

SY5 6JD

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GREAT CRESTED NEWT METHOD STATEMENT

1. Introduction

Planning consent has been granted for the conversion of a redundant agricultural building to form two residential dwellings at Wolvesacre Hall.

The Planning Consent includes two Conditions relating to ecology. Condition 4 states:

4. 4. No development, including site clearance, shall commence until a site wide Amphibian Method Statement for construction has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Method Statement should include:

- o Details of protective measures to be taken to minimise the impacts on GCNs.
- o Actions to be taken in the event that previously unidentified GCN features are found.
- o Details of measures to prevent or reduce incidental capture or killing of GCNs.

The Method Statement shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

2. Site description and background

The site under consideration is at Wolvesacre Hall which is located approximately 2.5km west of the north Shropshire market town of Whitchurch. The site is 230 metres west of the Welsh border. The site is surrounded by agricultural grassland, arable land and broadleaved woodland.

The farmstead has recently undergone significant modification to buildings. The original farmhouse has been demolished and re-built. One barn has been converted to a house and other farm buildings restored. The current application involves conversion of one traditional building for residential purposes and the renovation of another garage building and garden store.

Protected species surveys have been carried out in 2017 and 2018. As a result of positive eDNA tests for GCN from a nearby pond, a NRW development licence was obtained and the area due to be disturbed during demolition and reconstruction of the house was fenced with amphibian fencing. Trapping was undertaken but no GCN were caught.

Work on the current barn conversion will be largely restricted to the original footprint of the building although small gardens will be formed on an area to the east of the barn on land currently occupied by hard-standing.

3. GCN Method Statement

3.1 Legislation

Great Crested Newts (GCN) are a European Protected Species (EPS) and they and their habitats are fully protected under national (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) and European law (The Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)). The combined legislation makes it illegal to:

- intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure a great crested newt;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used for shelter and protection including resting and breeding places, whether occupied or not;
- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt when in a place of shelter;
- possess a great crested newt, or any part of it, unless acquired lawfully;
- sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale great crested newts or parts of them.

If GCN are found at any point during the development or activities outlined below, works must stop and an appropriately qualified ecologist should be contacted for advice, as well as Natural Resources Wales.

Contractors are prohibited from handling GCN.

3.2 Assessment of risk to GCN

The proposed building works will be restricted to the footprint of the existing barn and therefore the risk to GCN in this area is nil.

The area immediately surrounding the barn is yard and hardstanding. This offers no habitat to GCN other than in the form of occasional items of rubble or stored building materials which could provide sheltering places or (in the season) hibernation sites.

The proposed garden areas again occupy areas of existing hardstanding, as above.

Imported building materials stored near the site may inadvertently create opportunities for GCN to shelter. Subsequent movement of these materials may create a risk to GCN.

Adequate terrestrial habitat for GCN in the form of scrub and hedgerows exist within the vicinity of the pond. The likelihood of GCN migrating to the site is remote given the sub-optimal terrestrial habitat and the lack of water bodies on or near the site.

3.3 Reasonable avoidance measures

Induction of contractors

- A toolbox talk will be given to all site personnel in order to make them aware of the possible presence of GCN, how to identify this species and the avoidance measures to be used on site.
- A paper copy of the avoidance measures will be retained on site together with the contact details of the GCN licensed ecologist.

Finger- tip search

No longer than one week prior to groundworks, a finger-tip search will be carried out by licensed and experience ecologists to ensure that no GCN are present within the site. Any possible objects which may conceal GCN such as large stones, logs or other materials will be inspected and removed from site. If any GCN are found, work should stop and NRW contacted for guidance on appropriate action.

Timing & duration

- Any ground works/excavations will only be undertaken between March and October when night time temperatures are above 5°C in order to avoid disturbing hibernating amphibians.
- All works should take place during daylight hours when GCN are unlikely to be moving around the area.

Site compound

- The site compound should be situated on an area of existing hard-standing to avoid creating GCN resting places beneath stored materials etc.
- All site materials should be stored on pallets or other raised objects to avoid creating resting places/refuges for GCN.
- Any toxic or poisonous materials should be safely stored within a locked container.

Construction methods and special precautions

- All excavations on site will be covered at night or ramps will be provided to allow amphibians to exit excavations. All excavations will be checked for amphibians each morning prior to the re-commencement of works.
- All exposed new pipework and drains will be capped at night so as to avoid trapping amphibians.

- All excavated materials/waste will be stored in skips or similar and not on the ground where it could be used as a refuge/resting area by amphibians. Alternatively, all waste will be removed from site daily.
- All stored building materials that might be used as temporary resting places by amphibians will be stored off the ground on pallets or similar.

If GCN are found at any point during the development or activities outlined above, works must stop and an appropriately qualified ecologist should be contacted for advice, as well as Natural Resources Wales.

Contractors are prohibited from handling GCN.

APPENDIX 1. BIOSECURITY PROTOCOL MARCH 2021			
SITE NAME: WOLVESACRE HALL			
Species	Potential contamination route	Likelihood of risk	Operational Procedures/Actions required to minimise risks
Himalayan balsam	Introduction of species via construction machinery Introduction of seeds via contaminated soil.	Low. Himalayan Balsam is not known to be present on site or in the locality Low. There are no requirements to import soil.	Ensure owner and contractors know what Himalayan Balsam looks like. If any plants are identified these should be pulled up and left to dry before the seeds set (July/August).
Japanese knotweed	Introduction of species via construction machinery Introduction of fragments via contaminated soil.	Low. Japanese knotweed is not known to be present on site or in the locality Low. There are no requirements to import soil.	Ensure contractors know what Japanese knotweed looks like. If it is identified on site, refer to the Environment Agency's Japanese knotweed Code of Practice.
<i>Hymenoscyphus fraxineus</i> Ash dieback disease.	Machinery entering or leaving the site.	Low. Tree survey revealed no evidence of existing dieback on site. No requirements to import soil or trees to site.	Follow guidance given on government website: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-introduction-and-spread-of-tree-pests-and-diseases