

Cheshire Ecology Ltd.

**METHOD STATEMENT FOR GREAT CRESTED
NEWTS
RHOSROBIN, WREXHAM**

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 The Castlemead Group Ltd. is proposing to build 117 houses on land adjacent to Pandy Farm, at Rhosrobin, Wrexham (see Plan CE119-3), henceforth referred to as 'the site'. The development will result in the loss of one hedgerow and an area of disused semi-improved agricultural grassland.
- 1.1.2 Cheshire Ecology Ltd. carried out a great crested newt (GCN) survey of all water bodies within 500m of the site from April to June 2014. The survey identified a breeding population of GCN in two field ponds, approximately 360m and 425m respectively to the west of the site. The ponds had a medium sized population and a small population of GCN respectively. The GCN survey was carried out according to the methodology outlined in the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature (2001). Evidence of egg-laying was found on vegetation growing in a ditch that connected the two ponds. GCN larvae were found in the larger pond, but not the smaller one.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Previous surveys have shown that the great majority of great crested newts remain within 100m of their breeding pond. Smaller numbers may forage beyond this distance. To prevent injury to GCN a one-way exclusion fence will be installed along the inside of the site boundary.

2.2 Exclusion fencing

- 2.2.1 The exclusion fencing will follow the recommendations on Page 50 of the *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines* (English Nature, 2001). Wooden posts will be buried at least 20cm beneath the ground and will extend approximately 50cm high above the soil. The UV-inhibited plastic membrane will be attached to the wooden posts with nails or screws and a plastic washer. The lower part of the membrane will be buried to prevent GCN from burrowing beneath the fence.
- 2.2.2 To reduce damage to the hedgerow trees the one-way exclusion fencing will be installed approximately 2m from the centre line of the hedgerow. Where mature deciduous trees are encountered the exclusion fencing will be installed at a distance equivalent to 1.5 times the diameter of the crown of the tree. The fencing will be installed by a contractor nominated by the Castlemead Group Ltd., under the supervision of a Suitably Licenced Ecologist (SLE) who holds a GCN survey licence from Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The SLE will be appointed in writing before installation of the exclusion fence commences. The SLE may delegate responsibility for the checking and supervision of the site to a suitably trained Accredited Agent.
- 2.2.3 A removable gate, constructed from plastic sheet or semi-permanent panels, will control the entrance to the construction site. The gap between the exclusion fence and the gate will be closed by plastic sheet and waterproof adhesive tape. The gate will be closed at the end of the working day and sealed at the bottom with compacted soil. Two gates will also be constructed to allow access across the public footpath. This will prevent any great crested newts from gaining access to the site via the public footpath.
- 2.2.4 The exclusion fencing will be removed under the supervision of the SLE. Any GCN that are found during the works will be taken to the Receptor Area.
- 2.2.5 All subcontractors should be informed of the possibility that great crested newts may be found on the site. They should be provided with the name and telephone number of the SLE. GCN may also be found following completion of the development. In this case the contractor should contact the SLE for further advice.

2.3 Security

- 2.3.1 GCN exclusion fencing may be subject to vandalism or accidental damage. The contractor will maintain a supply of the polythene sheeting, waterproof adhesive tape, wooden posts, screws and washers to repair any damage that may occur. The exclusion fencing will be checked daily to ensure that it is intact. Any damage should be repaired within 12hrs of it being discovered. The contractor will keep a log of the checks and any damage that occurs. Failure to check the fencing during the period when newts are active may require trapping by a suitably licenced ecologist.

2.4 Staff training

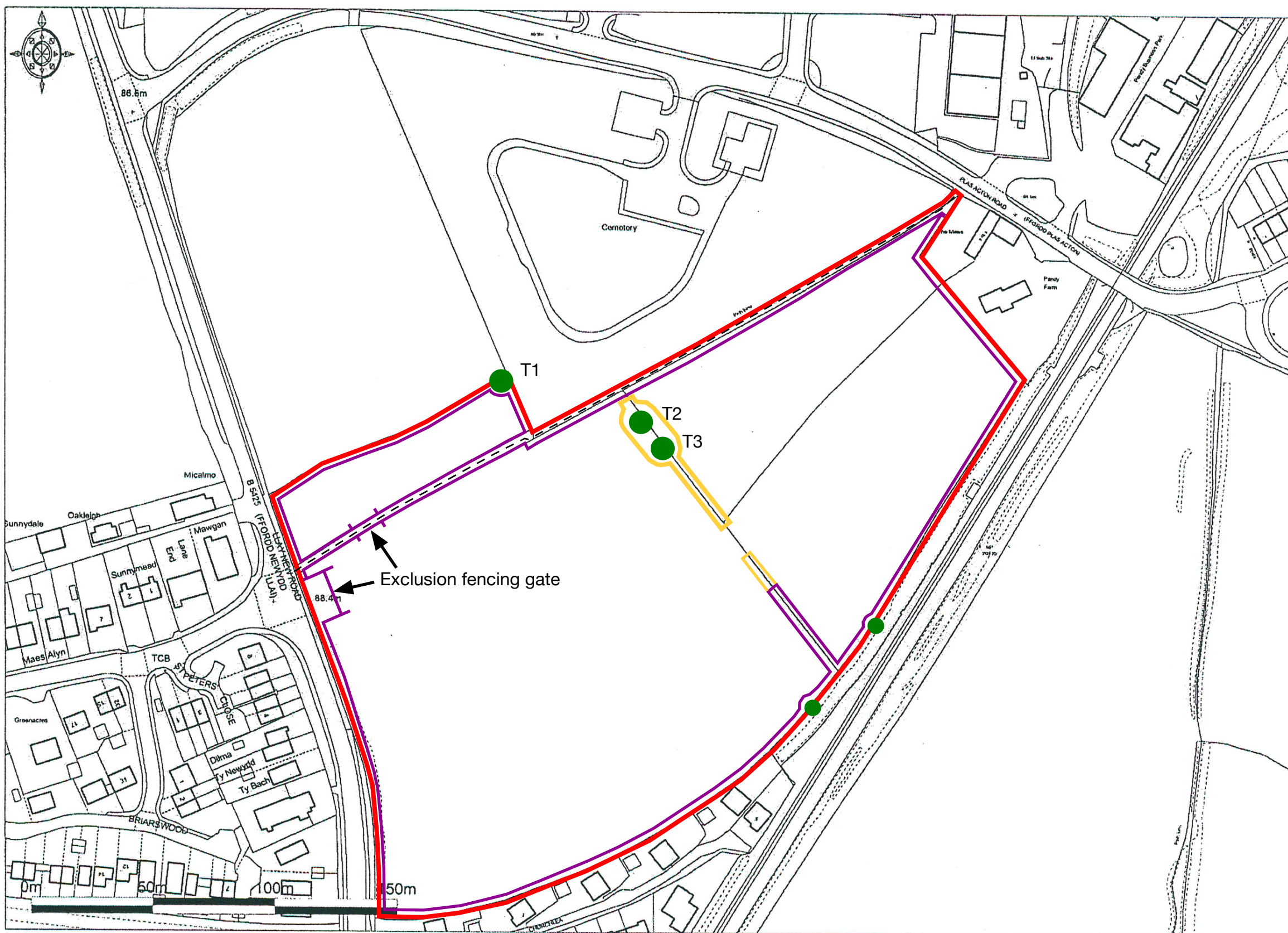
- 2.4.1 All contractors will be given a toolbox talk prior to work commencing on the site. The toolbox talk will provide a brief introduction to the legislation afforded to GCN, how to recognise them and what action to take if they are found. In the event that GCN are found, contractors must not handle them and work must cease until the SLE or an accredited agent can visit the site. The SLE or an accredited agent will take the animal to the designated receptor site.
- 2.4.2 The designated receptor site is the wooded bank behind the Rhosddu Industrial Estate. This is located a short distance from the main GCN breeding pond and is assumed to be the location where the majority of the animals hibernate in the winter. The Castlemead Group Ltd. will contact the landowner to ensure that they have permission to translocate great crested newts to the receptor site.

2.5 Mitigation

- 2.5.1 The Castlemead Group Ltd. has agreed to mitigate for the potential loss of terrestrial habitat by providing a Wildlife Area to the north of the proposed development site. This will be approximately 1.06ha in extent and will be used to create five ponds for great crested newt. The eastern boundary of the site will be planted with a selection of native deciduous trees, including sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and field maple *Acer campestre*. The deciduous trees will cover approximately 10% of the Wildlife Area and will act as a windbreak for northeasterly winds. The remaining area will be top sown with an agreed wildflower seed mixture and managed as a hay meadow.
- 2.5.2 Approximately 20% of the Wildlife Area will be left as rough grassland and another 10% will be planted with native shrubs such as guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, dog rose *Rosa canina*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and sloe *Prunus spinosa*. The remaining 40% will be managed as a species-rich hay meadow and mown annually in late July or early August. The arisings will be removed the site and disposed of elsewhere. The rough grassland will be cut every five years to prevent scrub from developing. At least three hibernacula will be constructed near the ponds to provide cover for the great crested newts. Piles of cut timber resulting from the removal of the single hedgerow during development will be deposited near the deciduous trees to provide a habitat for invertebrates. There will be no public access to the mitigation site.
- 2.5.3 A wooden fence will be erected along the southern boundary of the mitigation area to prevent access from the proposed development. The existing steel gate will remain and will be secured with a padlock to prevent unauthorised access.
- 2.5.4 No insecticides, artificial fertiliser or selective herbicides will be used within the Wildlife Area.
- 2.5.5 A detailed plan of the proposed mitigation area will be supplied to the Wrexham County Borough Council Ecologist within six months of planning permission being granted.

3 REFERENCES

English Nature (2001). *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. Peterborough.



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Key

- Site boundary
- Exclusion fencing
- Protective fencing
- Public footpath

Do not scale from this drawing

Client

Castlemead Group Ltd.

Project name

Rhosrobin, Wrexham

Drawing

Location of great crested newt
exclusion fencing

Drawing No CE119-3	Version 1.0	Date 13.10.2014
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Drawn by MP	Scale 1: 1,250
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