Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd
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Great Crested Newt (GCN) – Reasonable Avoidance Measures Statement (RAMS)

Application Site: Moreton Inn, Ruabon Road, Ruabon, Wrexham, LL14 6PU

Application Reference Number: P/2023/0095

Site Context

An approved planning application (Application Reference: P/2023/0095) with Wrexham County Borough Council involves the erection of nine dwellings following the demolition of a former public house, which was completed under a prior notification to the council (Application Reference: RHO P/2022/0210). An initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken at the site in 2021 by Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd, which concluded that, despite the on-site terrestrial habitats being of Low value to individual GCN, a programme of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) should be enacted at the site as a precautionary measure to prevent impacting upon GCN, given the proximity of the Johnstown Newt Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

A number of previous ecological documents have been produced in support of the scheme, including the following:

- No.35 Moreton Inn – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (March 2021),
- No.35 Moreton Inn – Dusk Survey Results (June 2021),
- No.35 Moreton Inn – Further Information Report (September 2021),
- PR-25-0002 Moreton Inn – Pond Creation and Management Plan (August 2025),
- PR-25-0002 Moreton Inn – Ecological Site Management Plan (November 2025).

During the PEA, the site was described as "*a former public house with associated hardstanding car park and garage/outhouse, and a pub garden lawn and shrubbery; there is existing access from the west via the Ruabon Road*."

Following demolition of the former public house, carried out under prior notification as above, the site now consists of a large expanse of sealed hardstanding, including the former car park and the footprint of the previous structure, alongside areas of rank grassland and scrub to the eastern and southern boundaries.

No ponds are present within 250m of the site, though two ponds can be found within 500m, both located to the north-west at distances of 270m & 340m respectively, and the busy Ruabon Road forms a barrier for dispersal between the ponds and the application site.

Method Statement Objectives

The PEA & Further Information Report concluded that *"development related activities on the application site (named above), such as building demolition, piling, vegetation clearance, or excavation in areas of suitable newt habitat, for example, may potentially affect Amphibians that may inhabit the local area."*

Whilst the structure has already been demolished, it is considered that the other listed activities could present a risk to amphibians. As a result, safeguards must be applied to protect these species; the Method Statement below outlines sequential measures to be implemented to ensure these objectives are achieved.

This document has been produced in accordance with Condition 8 of the granted Decision Notice from Wrexham County Borough Council, which states:

"8. No development shall commence until a scheme of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) for Great Crested Newts has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved RAMs scheme."

This document also references the GREAT CRESTED NEWT MITIGATION REQUIREMENTS – Johnstown Newt Site SAC and the Wider Countryside Planning Guidance Note produced by Wrexham Council.

Pre Works

- Exclusion fencing has been recommended previously, though given the low value terrestrial habitat on site, and the combination of an absence of ponds in 250m and the significant barrier to dispersal between the two ponds within 500m and the site, **this is not deemed necessary**, in accordance with the above document.
- Before any works commence at the application site, all site contractors/stakeholders will be briefed by 'Tool-box Talk' of the potential for protected species to occur on site, what to look out for and what to do in the event that animals are found. This talk should cover identification aids and the legal ramifications of an offence through reckless behaviour.
- Contractors/stakeholders will ask any questions as required following the toolbox talk, before signing the Audit Form (see overleaf) which will be kept by the Ecologist/ECoW for audit trail.
- Following the toolbox talk an "Environmental Champion" will be appointed, who will be responsible to report to the ECoW throughout the work schedule in the absence of ecological supervision.
- Photograph(s) will be displayed at the site office and/or kept by the contractor's personal being for visual reference purposes.
- Pre-commencement check – a site walkover is to take place by a suitably licensed and qualified Ecologist/ECoW before commencement of works, in order to pinpoint areas in which there may be a higher chance of encountering herpetofauna, which might include beneath paving slabs or piled materials.

Timings

- Juvenile and adult GCN are most vulnerable to harm during their **hibernation period which is considered to be November to February** inclusive. Site clearance / preparation works should avoid this sensitive period. If this is not possible, works carried out during this sensitive period (between November – February) should take into account the potential presence of hibernating wildlife within rubble piles, assorted items lay about site, areas of dense vegetation, for example.
- Construction works are to only take place during daylight hours as opposed to the night-time, when GCN are most active.

Demarcation of buffer zones

- The works area should be clearly demarcated, and no works extend outside of this area, to prevent any works occurring or materials being piled outside of the site boundary.
- No pallets, skips or otherwise are to be placed upon areas of dense vegetation and should instead only be placed on flat, cleared ground to avoid animals getting underneath; see **Figure 1** overleaf for specific locations where material storage will be permitted.

Habitat Manipulation Works

- These works will be carried out between March – October, to avoid the sensitive period as above, and under the direct supervision of an ecologist following the pre-commencement check.
- 3 to 5 days prior to stripping the site bare of vegetation in prep for development, it is recommended that habitats are first trimmed in phases; initially strimmed to 150mm in height using mowers, brush cutters or similar approved cutting method. Strimming should commence directionally north to south across the site at all cutting phases allowing animals to move off site, or towards desired or retained areas.

  N.B. *To avoid impacts to nesting birds, some vegetation may require clearance prior to March (for example dense scrub or ivy). Thus, clearance should be undertaken under supervision of the ecologist, and only when GCN are likely to be active, i.e. when nighttime temperatures remain above 3ºC and there have been no ground frosts or snowfall in the preceding week.*
- Once vegetation is cut to 150mm, a further hand search should take place within 72 hours. Following the hand search, when herpetofauna are confirmed absent, the vegetation should then be cut to ground level (or below 100mm), raked bare and **maintained at this sward height thereafter during the construction period**. Habitat manipulation like this will discourage animals from using the areas, thus will be less likely to be harmed by works on site.
- Any piles of vegetation will be placed on hardstanding and all brash piles to be removed within 48 hours of dumping to avoid being utilised by species seeking shelter.
- A hibernaculum will be constructed within a designated ecology area under instruction of the Ecologist (see Ecological Site Management Plan). Any herptiles found during the work schedule will be carefully relocated to the hibernacula acting as a safe receptor zone within the safety of the buffer zone throughout the work schedule.



Figure 1 – *Permitted material storage area and directional clearance with reference to red line boundary of site*

During Works

- Any clearance of potential refugia as considered applicable by the Ecologist delivering the toolbox talk (such as brick/log piles, paving slabs, plant pots, etc) or loss of existing vegetative features (dense grass and tall ruderal etc.), should only commence after a careful visual inspection (site walkover) and fingertip search has been carried out and the Ecologist has determined that no animals are present and is satisfied no animals are at risk.
- Any animals found, which are not Protected Species, will be removed from harm's way and placed into suitable buffer zones to the south of the site, species pending and following correct protocols/biosecurity measures.
- Following the initial habitat manipulation works as above, it is imperative that the works area is maintained at a level which renders it unusable by amphibian species such as GCN; this should involve at least a weekly mow / strim to ensure that vegetation levels are maintained at a low level and do not encourage animals to use the site.
- The "Environmental Champion" will engage on a weekly basis with the Ecologist / ECoW when not on site to ensure compliance with this RAMS.
- The impact of works on adjacent habitats will be avoided by the clear demarcation of the works area. All work will be carried out in accordance with all relevant Pollution Prevention Guidelines published by the Environment Agency which may include, but is not limited to, PPG1 (general), PPG5 (works in, near, or liable to affect watercourses) and PPG6 (work at construction & demolition sites).
- Contingency/emergency plans should be drawn up to address chemical spillage, drainage, collision, etc.
- Machinery and materials to remain on bare ground and reasonable efforts must be made to avoid creating piles, or accumulated aggregates. Materials that require piling will be stored within areas of bare ground above ground level, using pallets to prevent animals from seeking shelter below.
- Any excavated materials or soils stored overnight will be searched prior to being used as infill.

- Should excavations/trenches be required, it should be ensured that they are not left open overnight to avoid amphibians and/or mammals falling into them and becoming trapped. If trenches cannot be filled in after the working day for whatever reason, an escape mechanism such as wooden planks of 5cm wide as a minimum should be placed in them at a 45-degree diagonal angle, to serve as an escape mechanism to small animals including mammals, reptiles & amphibians.
- Excavations should be checked in the morning on a daily basis for the presence of any animals that may have fallen in during the night.
- All site operatives will maintain a watching brief throughout the work schedule and report any issues, anomalies or discrepancies to the ecologist or environmental champion as appointed.
- If a newt is found in the absence of supervision, work must stop immediately, and contact should be made with the assigned licensed, qualified ecologist / ECoW.
- Any frogs or toads found should be carefully caught by the Ecologist / ECoW, placed (where capture is possible and humane) in a ventilated box using dampened gloved hands and released into suitable nearby vegetation that will be unaffected by the proposed works. Toads should not be touched using non-gloved hands as they secrete a toxin through their skin, and they should not be handled for longer than is necessary. At no point should anyone handle anything resembling a newt or a reptile.
- Plastic netting, wire coils or similar hazardous features should not be left on the ground, to avoid entanglement. Aggregates/constructional materials should be stored on pallets as opposed to the storing on the ground.
- **In the event a newt is found work must cease**; the Ecologist will be made aware of the finding and will appraise the situation providing further advice. Site staff must be made aware that if GCN are found there is a correct procedure in place to follow, and failure to halt works may result in committing an offence. At no point should any person handle a GCN or suspected GCN. Unlicensed handling is illegal and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.

A Guide to Timings

See the Table below for a detailed breakdown of timings required for specific works at the site.

Operation	Months												Notes
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Early understanding													
Toolbox Talk	Any time prior to works												Soon as all site workers are on site
Appoint Environmental Champion	Following toolbox talk												-
Pre-works													
Buffer zone demarcation & signage	Pre-habitat manipulation & site walkover												To avoid encroaching in sensitive areas
Site walkover by ecologist			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Prior to habitat manipulation
Hand search by ecologist			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Prior to habitat manipulation
Habitat manipulation			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Staggered as above
During Works													
Ongoing habitat management	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	As required, weekly as above

Operation	Months												Notes
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Hibernaculum creation in ecology area			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				To provide receptor area for located animals
Reporting to licensed ECoW	Weekly												To ensure compliance with RAMS
										Recommended timeframe:			Y

Identification Aids

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)



- Largest Newt in the UK, up to 16cm in length, but juveniles are smaller,
- Big & Black animal with Rough, Warty skin,
- Orange/yellow colouring on Belly,
- Irregular black blotches on Belly,
- Toes banded Black/orange (Yellow toe nails),
- Male has a jagged crest on its back which sags when not in the water, and a separate smoother crest along tail, white stripe on tail too,

DO	DON'T
If a GCN is discovered during works, **STOP ALL WORKS** in the area, inform your site manager and contact the project ecologist **IMMEDIATELY**.	Do not touch or handle a GCN they are very delicate – and it is against the law. Penalties for breaking the law include unlimited fines, imprisonment and seizure of equipment. **DO NOT RISK BREAKING THE LAW**

For any questions call Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd – Tel: 01704 875 781

Toolbox Talk Audit Form

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Site: **Moreton Inn**		Ecologist(s):	
I can confirm I have attended the formal Toolbox talk held by the named Ecological Consultant. I confirm I am aware of the legislation in relation to herpetofauna species that may be in the locale. I confirm I will endeavour, to the best of my capability, to follow the measures outlined in the RAMS to protect all animals from harm, and know what to do if I encounter protected species.			
Name:		*Signed:*	
Company:		*Date:*	
Name:		*Signed:*	
Company:		*Date:*	
Name:		*Signed:*	
Company:		*Date:*	
Name:		*Signed:*	
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