



THE BAT CONSULTANCY

**GREAT CRESTED NEWT MITIGATION STRATEGY /
PRECAUTIONARY METHODS OF WORKS (PMW)**

CHERHILL NEW VILLAGE HALL CRTBO
Park Lane, Wiltshire

JANUARY 2017

THE BAT CONSULTANCY The Cottages, Wagg Drove, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9ER
t01458 252 794 einfo@thebatconsultancy.co.uk www.thebatconsultancy.co.uk

Proprietor: Caroline Wright

PRECAUTIONARY METHODS OF WORKS (PMW)

GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Cherhill New Village Hall CRtBO, Park Lane, Wiltshire

January 2017

CONTENTS

1 Background Information	3
2 PMW	4
2.2 Worker Awareness	4
2.3 Fencing	5
2.4 Removal of Hedgerow Specimens	5
2.5 Destructive Searches & Site Strip	6
2.6 Construction Phase	8
2.7 Action In response To Great Crested Newts	8
3 Mitigation Measures / Enhancement In Brief	9

1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1.1 The majority of the terrestrial habitat within the Project Area is sub-optimal for great crested newts (GCN) as it is managed by grazing and cutting. The pattern of regular disturbance, this type of habitat undergoes as part of normal agricultural practices, significantly reduces its suitability for GCN. The Site is also bounded by two roads; to the south, is a wide and fast main road (A4 Marlborough to Chippenham) and to the west, a lesser road used by traffic entering and exiting Cherhill village. These roads may provide a partial barrier to newts venturing onto the Site.
- 1.1.2 The closest pond to the Site is 304m to the northwest with two minor roads as obstacles before reaching the Site. Although GCN may be found up to 250m from ponds (and up to 500m from ponds in exceptional circumstances), studies by Jehle and Cresswell & Whitworth have shown that within a GCN terrestrial range, the habitat within 50m of the pond supports the majority of a GCN population. Dispersal of newts, beyond this zone, is only likely when there are suitable habitat features that link a pond to "optimal" terrestrial habitat. Therefore, the likelihood of engagement with newts within the Site is considered to be low, given that ponds suited to a newt's requirements were not noted on the Site or within 250m of the Site.
- 1.1.3 The area of terrestrial habitat loss / subject to temporary disturbance covers an area of approximately 0.69 ha and as such, is not considered significant. The terrestrial habitat quality within the proposed development area was considered to range from poor within the managed field to moderate value within the hedgerow that is subject to a small section for removal (3m). The proposed development site is located within distant habitat from any pond and does not present a dispersal barrier or potential for population fragmentation and therefore NO long-term adverse impacts for GCN are anticipated.

2 PMW

2.1.1 It is considered highly unlikely that the proposed works will impact GCN. However, to ensure that any impacts on GCN (if present) are avoided, the following working methodology will be followed:

2.2 Worker Awareness

2.2.1 As a matter of general good ecological practice, an understanding of amphibians and the undertaking of sympathetic working practices will reduce the likelihood of an encounter with and harm to them.

2.2.2 Works will commence during the active season for amphibians (mid March – Mid October, weather dependant) to avoid winter hibernation.

2.2.3 Prior to the commencement of works at the Site, clearance/construction staff undertaking the development will be provided with a 'tool box talk' in relation to GCN (by an appropriately licensed ecologist) prior to being permitted on Site. The talk will stress the importance of ensuring that all works are carried out diligently with regard to GCN and under the supervision of an 'Ecological Watching Brief'. They will also be informed that in the event that a GCN is subsequently found to be present, construction work likely to affect the species will be suspended until any necessary licences are obtained by the ecological consultant after which, the developer will commission and implement suitable mitigation measures.

2.2.4 Although an encounter with GCN is considered unlikely, all contractors should be made aware of how to identify this species. To aid identification, a poster will be provided which can be used during the tool box talk and pinned on a site notice board.

2.2.5 Sympathetic working practices include:

- Avoid creating potential refuges.
- Amphibians will utilise stacked materials such as wood, stone, boards or metal sheets as refuges. Keep the Site tidy and stored materials off the ground – for example on pallets where possible.

- Should it be necessary to store materials such as topsoil on Site then the stockpile should be smoothed to prevent access by amphibians into potential cavities.
- Amphibians like to hide under refuges such as those discussed above. Staff should simply demonstrate awareness when working and moving materials. Should an animal other than a GCN be found it should be gently moved, for example in a clean bucket, to a suitable location within habitat well away from the working area.

2.3 Fencing

2.3.1 To ensure no inadvertent plant movement and disturbance of the field outside of the development area (to the east), works will be restricted to the designated development area and the impact of works on adjacent habitats avoided by the clear demarcation of the works area.

2.3.2 A Harris fence, a post and rail fence or a stock fence (depending upon the use of the adjacent land area outside of the development Site) shall be erected along the boundary line creating an 'exclusion zone'. The grassland vegetation within the exclusion zone will be left undisturbed throughout site clearance, development and post development, maintaining a safe-haven for wildlife throughout the development.

2.3.3 Two-meter grass margins will be maintained around the existing hedge/tree/ditched boundaries of the Site. These will act as a buffer to prevent damage to these features during site works. These grass buffers will be protected using a post and rail fence that will be erected prior to site preparation and development and will remain in-situ until the development is complete.

2.4 Removal of Hedgerow Specimens

2.4.1 It is understood that to avoid potential risks to nesting birds, hedgerow specimens will be removed prior to the main works proceeding. The following methodology should be followed to reduce the impact on biodiversity at the site:

- 2.4.2 Vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside the nesting bird season. The nesting bird season extends between March and September inclusive (weather dependant). If this is NOT possible, immediately prior to works commencing, all vegetation earmarked for removal, or to be disturbed, will be checked by an experienced ecologist for nesting birds. If birds are found to be nesting, works that may impact on them will be delayed until the young have fledged abandoning the nest naturally.
- 2.4.3 The impact of vehicles/machinery should be minimised with work vegetation clearance undertaken from hardstanding or agreed areas to ensure that impact on the ground is minimised.
- 2.4.4 No potential refuge features should be removed from October-April – such as logs or other materials in contact with the ground, roots or stumps, as hibernating amphibians may use these features.
- 2.4.5 The stumps of hedgerow species should be cut no lower than 300 mm from the ground.
- 2.4.6 Bramble should be brush-cut to no lower than 150 mm with cuttings removed in order to further reduce nesting bird potential and reduce the value of the site generally.
- 2.4.7 Brash should be removed from site or chipped, with chippings removed. No piles of brash or chippings should be left on the ground.

2.5 Destructive Searches and Site Strip

- 2.5.1 The following methodology will be followed for site preparation:

Hedgerow

- 2.5.2 To allow removal of the section of hedgerow, potential refuges shall be searched and topsoil stripped during the active season for amphibians (mid March – Mid October, weather dependant). This will be completed by hand under the supervision of a licenced ecologist and will include the removal of logs/branches, stone and other loose material. Only when the licensed ecologist is completely satisfied that there remains no risk to amphibians may a machine be used.

- 2.5.3 In order to widen the existing entrance, a small strip of hedgerow is to be removed. The hedge species will be cut to 300mm above ground level. The careful grubbing-up of the stumps will commence once the ecologist has completed a hand search of the base of the hedge to ensure GCN are absent. Grubbing-up will commence under the supervision of a suitably licenced ecologist
- 2.5.4 When surface features have been removed and stumps removed, the area can be gently topsoil stripped, with mammal holes chased back. This can be completed using an excavator and will be undertaken under the supervision of a licenced ecologist.

Grassland

- 2.5.5 The Site must be grazed or cut 48 hours prior to grass clearance. Immediately before clearance commences, the grassland will be walked and searched by the ecologist to search for any GCN.
- 2.5.6 The grass is to be cut to a height of 15cm using hand tools such as a strimmer / brushcutter. The cuttings will be removed from site immediately to limit habitat in which any newts can hide.
- 2.5.7 Should a second cut be required (on the decision of the ecologist), the vegetation will cut to a length of 10cm and cuttings removed from site as before.
- 2.5.8 Finally, a destructive search of the ground habitat will be carried out by slowly and carefully removing the top layer of vegetation. This will be implemented using a front loaded forked bucket on a JCB or similar smaller vehicle.
- 2.5.9 The ecologist will walk alongside the JCB to watch for creatures that may be caught in the bucket or within the grass. If sighted the ecologist will signal to the driver to halt works whilst he/she captures the newt and removes the individual/s and carefully places at the base of a hedge within the exclusion zone, a least 30m from the work area away from site works. Works will immediately cease at this time and a licence may be required from Natural England to proceed.

- 2.5.10 The top layer of vegetation will be smoothed over and kept in a single pile towards the west of the site until development works are complete or removed completely from site to prevent the creation of unwanted habitat.
- 2.5.11 Once these areas are confirmed free of GCN, works can then commence.

2.6 Construction Phase

- 2.6.1 No storage of materials or driving of vehicles will take place within the field adjacent to / outside of the development area (the 'exclusion zone'). Access to the Site will be via the existing road over agreed routes.
- 2.6.2 Trenches and other excavations should be backfilled before nightfall. Should this not be possible, a ramp will be left to allow fauna to easily exit. The ecologist will check that suitable provision has been made for escape of animals.
- 2.6.3 Any refuelling of equipment or use of oil and chemicals, etc, will take place on hard-standing areas or other areas of unsuitable newt habitat that is located away from any ditches.
- 2.6.4 Any vehicular movement across the Site should, where possible, be restricted to areas of habitat made unsuitable for GCN, where this is not possible any proposed vehicle routes will be hand-searched by an ecologist prior to vehicle movement.
- 2.6.5 Any works to existing ditches will take place during the winter months under appropriate ecological supervision.

2.7 Action in Response to Great Crested Newts

- 2.7.1 Should a GCN be recorded during the vegetation clearance when an ecologist is present, all works will cease and the animal moved by the ecologist to a place of safety within suitable terrestrial habitat. The ecologist will liaise as appropriate with the local planning authority ecologist and Natural England.

- 2.7.2 Should a GCN be recorded during the construction period, all works will cease immediately and a licenced ecologist contacted immediately who will advise on further action. The ecologist will liaise as appropriate with the local planning authority ecologist and Natural England. A licenced ecologist from The Bat Consultancy can be contacted as follows:

Caroline Wright - (07583 023768)

3 MITIGATION MEASURES/ENHANCEMENT IN BRIEF

- 3.1.1 Areas of terrestrial habitat within and bounding the development site will be created for GCN, in the form of tussock forming grassland, the establishment of hedgerows, gapping-up of existing hedges and the creation of a wildlife friendly car parking area maintaining the grass using Grasscrete or a similar system. Trees and shrubs are to be integrated across the Site.
- 3.1.2 These features will provide suitable habitat for GCN as well as providing corridors of movement across and around the Site, greatly improving links to other terrestrial habitat.