

## **GREAT CRESTED NEWT METHOD STATEMENT**

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P21/03344/F | Land South of Badminton Road, Old Sodbury, BS37 6LU

13-January-2022

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Great Crested Newt (GCN) Method Statement has been prepared at the request of South Gloucestershire Council in resolving matters relating to GCN as Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) are considered to be required ahead of impacting construction works.
- 1.2 The RAMs set out within this Method Statement shall be adopted and enshrined within a forthcoming Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

### **2. RISK OF ENCOUNTERING GCN**

- 2.1 Populations of GCN are known in relatively close proximity to the south of the railway line and west of the nearby watercourse and are known to be utilising breeding ponds situated approximately 125m and 75m from the application site boundary respectively.
- 2.2 Whilst the railway line and watercourse are considered to present barriers to amphibian dispersal the risk of encountering GCN within suitable terrestrial habitat within the application site itself cannot be ruled out.
- 2.3 On the basis that the risk is sufficiently low, it is therefore proposed that impacting works proceed without a GCN development mitigation licence provided that RAMs (see below) are implemented prior to and during the works.

### **3. REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES**

3.1 As a precautionary approach RAMs will be adopted in order to avoid and/or minimise any unforeseen disturbance impacts on local GCN populations.

3.2 The following measures shall be adopted:

#### Site Induction

3.3 All staff working on site will be made aware of the potential presence of GCN including their legal status as a UK as a protected species. This will take the form of a toolbox talk to be conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist (who holds a Natural England Great Crested Newt Survey Licence) to all contractors ahead of works commencing.

3.4 The legal protection afforded to GCN makes it an offence to handle these animals without either a survey licence or a development mitigation licence to be obtained from Natural England. Accordingly, through this toolbox talk and measures set out in this GCN Method Statement, all site staff will be made aware that if GCN are found onsite there is a correct procedure in place to follow, and failure to halt works may result in committing an offence under relevant wildlife legislation.

#### Timing of Works

3.5 All works to prepare the land ahead of development will be undertaken during the spring/summer period when GCN are in their active phase, thereby avoiding the hibernation period (November – February inclusive).

3.6 Vegetation clearance will be undertaken in a phased manner under the supervision of an appropriately qualified ecologist. Ground vegetation, any rubble and debris clearance will encompass a finger-tip search around all potential refugia being careful of any sheltering amphibians and/or any other potential species (e.g. reptiles).

3.7 Areas of grassland and scrub shall be strimmed to a height of 150mm under supervision of the appointed ecologist. All arisings will be removed and these areas will then be left undisturbed for at least 48 hours. Thereafter, areas which have been strimmed will be hand searched by the supervising ecologist where required.

- 3.8 Soil stripping works will progress in a phased manner using a suitable excavator thereby limiting ground disturbance through tracking. The supervising ecologist will ensure the working procedure is adhered to and to relocate any amphibians/reptiles encountered during works.
- 3.9 In the event that any individual GCN is found during these works, then all works must cease immediately and advice sought from the supervising ecologist and/or Natural England.
- 3.10 Although considered unlikely, in the event that a significant impact to GCN population(s) is identified by the supervising ecologist at any point during the works, then all works must cease immediately and a development mitigation will likely be required from Natural England.

#### Work Protocol

- 3.11 Care should be taken that all works, plant and materials remain on already cleared ground avoiding any encroachment on retained/boundary features (e.g. hedgerows and tree root protection zones).
- 3.12 Building materials should be stored on pallets (or other suitable means) to avoid contact with the ground to prevent amphibians seeking refuge beneath (and resulting disturbance/killing/injury of any amphibians).
- 3.13 Any aggregates such as gravel and sand must be delivered in bulk bags and stored on pallets.
- 3.14 Waste materials should be removed from site immediately or placed in skips.
- 3.15 No piles of rubbish or waste should be allowed to remain on site as this could create further refuge sites for amphibians.
- 3.16 Trenches and other excavations should be backfilled before nightfall. If this is not possible, ramps must be left to allow any GCN a suitable means of exit.

#### **4. SUMMARY**

- 4.1 It is through these RAMs that potential impacts to any GCN can be avoid and reduced to a sufficiently low level impact.
- 4.2 A copy of this GCN Method Statement and/or CEMP should be made available on-site along with the contact details of the appointed ecological consultant overseeing the works.