



**Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors**

Your Ref: 67823
Our Ref: 4587

Gary Hoerty Associates Chartered Surveyors
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Monday, 07 February 2022

Dear Sirs;

RE: PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING WITH NEW LIVESTOCK BUILDING

We would report that in accordance with the request by GMEU ponds within 250m of the site were assessed in respect of their potential to support Great Crested Newts (GCN) on the 18th June 2018 and 7th February 2022. GMEU report breeding GCN from these ponds.

Site assessments were undertaken by Andrew Gardner and Matthew Thomas both of whom hold GCN survey licences. The purpose of these assessments was to assess the pond and surrounding habitat and correlate these with the proposed site works. This allowed a determination to be made if there was a significant risk to GCN and if additional surveys were warranted. Natural England licensing guidelines indicate that if such an assessment results in a low risk being identified, no additional surveys are required.

Records:

GMEU report records of breeding GCN just over 20m from the site.

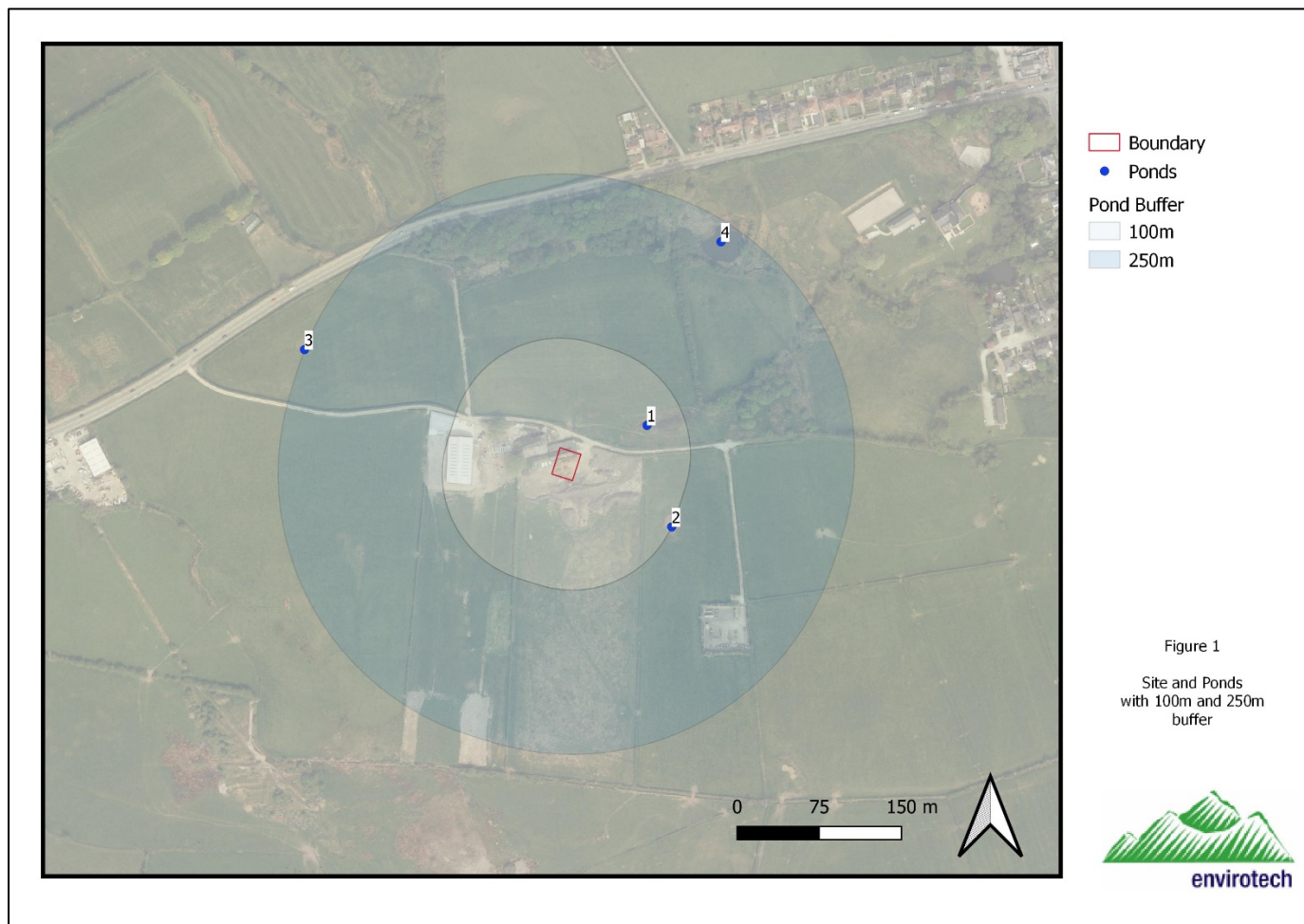


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Ponds:

There are four ponds within 250m of the centre of the proposed development, Figure 1.



Access to Pond 1 was possible from a public footpath. Pond 2 was dry, Pond 3 appears ephemeral and Pond 4 was not accessible. In accordance with Natural England guidelines, Pond 1 was subject to closer investigation in order to gauge its potential for use by GCN.

The pond was found to be open to grazing horses, shallow and heavily poached. These has been little change between 2018 and 2022.



Plate 1, 2 and 3 – Pond 1 and surrounds

Habitat:

The habitat immediately adjacent to Pond 1 is comprised of open grassland and scattered shrubs. This would have a moderate value to amphibians in their terrestrial phase.

The development area comprises an open area of bare, compacted ground which is frequently trafficked by machinery and an existing agricultural building. It would have negligible value to amphibians and is a potentially dangerous environment for them to cross.



Plate 4 – *Development area*

Pond 1 was subject to HSI assessment.

SI1 - Location	0.5
SI2 - Pond area	0.5
SI3 - Pond drying	0.6
SI4 - Water quality	0.5
SI4 - Shade	1
SI6 - Fowl	1
SI7 - Fish	1
SI8 - Ponds	0.7
SI9 - Terr'l habitat	0.67
SI10 - Macrophytes	0.8
HSI	0.70

Figure 2- HSI Score

Pond 1 scores 0.70 which makes it good for Great Crested Newts.

Assessment:

The rapid risk assessment tool issued by Natural England has been used for this site. **This assumes Great Crested Newts are present in Pond 1 and 4.** The development site area is 0.05Ha

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.3
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.01
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.3
Rapid risk assessment result:	AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY	

Figure 3- Risk Assessment

This indicates that if Great Crested Newts were present in the ponds nearby the likelihood of committing an offence is likely.

Natural England's guidelines state that for an Amber warning

"Amber: offence likely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that an offence is likely. In this case, the best option is to redesign the development (location, layout, methods, duration or timing; see Non-licensed avoidance measures tool) so that the effects are minimised. You can do this and then re-run the risk assessment to test whether the result changes, or preferably run your own detailed site-specific assessment. Bear in mind that this generic risk assessment will over- or under-estimate some risks because it cannot take into account site-specific details, as mentioned in caveats above. In particular, the exact location of the development in relation to resting places, dispersal areas and barriers should be critically examined. Once you have amended the scheme you will need to decide if a licence is required; this should be done if on balance you believe an offence is reasonably likely."

Recommendations:

Although the risk assessment states an offence is likely, the habitat on site is currently of negligible value.

Recommendations are as follows:

1. Store any materials used for construction on compacted ground/hard standing only or the concrete pad adjacent the site.
2. Raise stored materials off the ground, e.g on pallets
3. Backfill any excavation before nightfall or provide ramps to allow newts to exit easily
4. Any piles of loose material (e.g. soil) which are to be left on site should be compacted i.e. tracked over by machinery, immediately to reduce the risk of amphibians using the material as a shelter
5. Construction traffic should not enter or leave the site during the hours of darkness
6. Should GCN be found during work within the construction area all work should cease and the ecological consultant for this project should be consulted prior to work recommencing

Summary:

The risk to Great Crested Newts at the site is considered to be low due to the bare compacted ground on which development will occur and existing site disturbance. Should Great Crested Newts occur within the ponds locally, the risk of any offence being committed with the above mitigation in place during construction of a new building is very low.

Taking the above mitigation into account work construction of a new agricultural building on the site under the above methods statement would not be licensable.

We are unable to comment on the impact of ground works reported by GMEU in their response to this application shown on satellite images as we do not know the extent, duration, timing or basis upon which they were undertaken.

Should you wish to discuss this assessment please do not hesitate to contact me in the first instance.

Yours Sincerely



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Director Envirotech NW Ltd