

GREAT CRESTED NEWT SURVEY FOR LAND OFF LIGHTFOOT GREEN LANE, PRESTON, LANCASHIRE

2018



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of amphibian surveys undertaken on three ponds located around the site off Lightfoot Green Lane, Preston, Lancashire. The aims of the study were to determine the presence or likely absence of amphibian species, notably the protected Great Crested Newt. This is in order to identify any potential constraints posed to the proposed development on the site.
- 1.2 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is protected by European and UK legislation; its presence is therefore a material consideration in the determination of any planning application. Developers are obliged to determine presence prior to any planning application. Other amphibian species are protected to a lesser extent and may still represent a planning consideration.
- 1.3 Amphibian surveys were undertaken in spring 2018 on all suitable ponds within 250m of the proposed development site off Lightfoot Green Lane. The surveys were undertaken in accordance with Natural England guidelines (Natural England, 2001), with half the survey effort undertaken between mid-April and mid-May 2018.
- 1.4 Great Crested Newt was not found within the ponds during the presence/ likely absence surveys in 2018.
- 1.5 No impact on Great Crested Newt is anticipated during the construction of the proposed development, based on the findings of these surveys.
- 1.6 These results are valid for up to 2 years.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2018 by PWA Planning to undertake a Great Crested Newt survey for land off Lightfoot Green Lane, Preston, Lancashire. The site will be the subject of a hybrid planning application for the reprofiling of the site (Phase 1), which will include the profiling for an attenuation pond, and for residential development on the site (Phase 2). An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in April 2018 and the ponds were located and assessed for their potential to support Great Crested Newt. Given the proximity of the ponds to the site, it was recommended to undertake a Great Crested Newt survey.
- 2.2 The proposed development site is situated off Lightfoot Green Lane, Preston, Lancashire (O.S. grid reference: SD 51847 34003 – see Figure 1). The site is an area of grassland. A tree and scrub belt exists along the northern and western edges of the site. This area is damp and supports ephemeral pools and ditches. The M55 runs along the southern boundary of the site with a railway line bordering the site to the east. In the wider landscape, the site is surrounded by farmland and tree belts, with a working quarry to the west. Figure 1 (below) shows the location of the site and the location of the ponds which were the subject of the survey.
- 2.3 Great Crested Newt is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is listed under Annex IV of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This is implemented in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 2.4 The aims of the survey were to identify the presence or likely absence of Great Crested Newt (GCN) in the vicinity of the proposed development and if GCN is found to be present, provide population estimates through additional surveys, which will feed into mitigation proposals.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 A desk study was carried out to identify all ponds within 250 metres of the site. The desk study was conducted using O.S. maps, Magic Maps, previous surveys and aerial photography. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site and the ponds was undertaken in April 2018.
- 3.2 Following the desktop study and HSI assessment, three ponds were located within 250 metres of the site. These were located on or closely adjacent to the site and to the north-west of the development site within pastoral farmland.
- 3.3 In accordance with Natural England guidelines, four survey visits to the ponds were carried out within the survey season. Half of the survey visits were completed between mid-April and mid-May. If no evidence of Great Crested Newt (GCN) was found during these first four visits, then no further surveys determine population size were required. However, if presence was confirmed, it was necessary to complete a further two visits to complete population assessments as these are required to inform any subsequent European Protected Species (EPS) licence application, if required.
- 3.4 A combination of bottle trapping, egg searches, netting and torch-light surveys were utilised during the course of the amphibian surveys. A minimum of three of the four methods were utilised on each visit.

Bottle Trap Surveys

Bottle traps were set in the evening and operated overnight with the traps being emptied early the next morning. Traps were operated within the maximum time limit set by Natural England (i.e. up to 17 hours for traps with an air bubble). The bottle traps were placed at 2-3 metres spacing around the margins of the pond.

Egg Searches

GCN lay their eggs singly on submerged leaves which are folded over the egg to form a protective 'purse'. Egg searches were carried out by walking or wading the shoreline of each water body and searching suitable aquatic vegetation for the characteristic folded leaves.

Torch Surveys

Each of the ponds was surveyed by walking the perimeter after dusk and searching the water using a 1,000,000 candle power torch.

Netting

A long-handled dip-net was used to sample areas around the margin of the water bodies. A perimeter walk was undertaken, as with the torch surveys, with approximately 15 minutes of netting utilised per 50m of shoreline.

- 3.5 Surveys were undertaken by Kate Reed, Rosie Fisher, Ben Crossthwaite and an assistant. Each ecologist is experienced and fully trained in Great Crested Newt surveys and Rose and Kate hold Natural England Great Crested Newt survey licences: (Licence numbers: 2016-25508-CLS-CLS & 2015-18445-CLS-CLS).

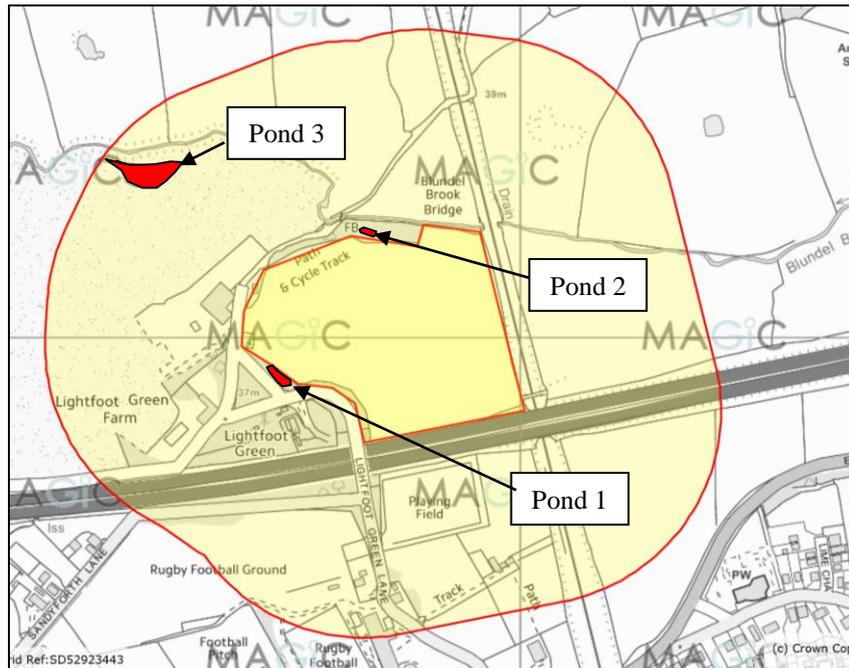


Figure 1 showing the sites redline boundary, a 250m perimeter line and pond locations

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 Great Crested Newt (GCN) was not located within any of the ponds surveyed.

Pond Descriptions

Pond 1

- 4.2 Pond 1 is located directly adjacent to the site along the south western boundary. The pond is between the red line boundary of the site and Lightfoot Green Lane. To the north is a large arable field. The pond has a perimeter of approximately 80 metres. The pond is heavily vegetated with scrub, covered in algae and shaded with trees and scrub (see Photograph 1). The pond is formed on a compact hardcore surface making bottle trapping difficult. The water was clear making the torch light surveys easy to conduct. The pond dried out during the surveys, forming two pools at first and then becoming wet mud with no water column.



Photograph 1 showing Pond 1

Pond 2

- 4.3 Pond 2 borders the northern boundary of the site within a carr. The pond has an approximate perimeter of 30 metres. Aquatic vegetation does exist within this pond, such as Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. After the first survey visit Pond 2 dried out, leaving mud, leaf litter and general detritus (see Photograph 2). To the south of the site, a large arable field exists and to the north is a brook.



Photograph 2 showing Pond 2 when dry

Pond 3

- 4.4 Pond 3 is located approximately 170 metres to the north-west of the site. The pond is situated within a pastoral, grazed field and has a perimeter of approximately 130 metres. Evidence of poached ground around the pond and ponds edge suggests cattle access the ponds entire perimeter. The water was turbid making torch light surveys difficult.



Photograph 3 showing Pond 3

Survey Results

- 4.5 Table 1 shows the dates that the surveys were carried out and which methods were used on each date, along with the weather for each date. Surveys were only conducted when overnight air temperatures were 5°C or above. Weather conditions were fair on all the survey dates.

Table 1. Dates of survey and method used					
Survey Dates	Torch-light surveys	Bottle trapping	Egg searches	Netting	Weather
03/04 May 2018	✓	✓	✓		Dry, overcast, overnight low temp: 8°C
08/09 May 2018	✓	✓	✓		Dry, clear, overnight low temp: 8°C
23/24 May 2018	✓	✓		✓	Dry, clear, overcast, overnight low temp: 10°C
04/05 June 2018	✓	✓	✓		Dry, overcast, overnight low temp: 11°C

- 4.6 No Great Crested Newts were found in any pond. No newt eggs were recorded in the ponds. A maximum of twelve Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* adults and larvae were found. These were found by bottle trapping and torch light survey methods in Pond 3. An adult Common Frog *Rana temporaria*, Frog tadpoles and Three-spined Sticklebacks *Gasterosteus aculeatus* were also recorded.

5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Great Crested Newt (GCN) was not recorded during the presence/likely absence surveys of the ponds within the 250m survey area from the proposed development site off Lightfoot Green Lane, Preston, Lancashire. Four survey methodologies were used, within the optimum survey season and during optimum weather conditions.
- 5.2 No impact on GCN is anticipated from the proposed development, based on the findings of this survey. The habitat on the proposed development site is predominantly intensively managed grassland, which is considered to be hostile habitat for GCN.
- 5.3 No further amphibian survey work is required and there is no requirement to carry out mitigation for GCN. **However, if Great Crested Newt is encountered during the course of the reprofiling work or the residential development phase, then work must stop immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist be contacted for advice.**
- 5.4 A maximum count of twelve Smooth Newt was returned during any one survey visit over the survey period, at Pond 3. Smooth Newt are protected from sale only under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 5.5 The masterplan for the site should take into account the need to provide greenspace within the development. The edges of the site could be landscaped buffer zones. Existing trees and hedgerows are to be retained where possible.

REFERENCES

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

Natural England (2010) *Template for Method Statement to support application for licence under Regulation 53(2)(e) in respect of Great Crested Newts Triturus cristatus. Form WML-A14-2 (Version November 2010)*. Natural England, Peterborough.

Oldham, R. S., Keeble, J., Swan, M. J. S. and Jeffcote, M. (2000) *Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus)*. Herpetological Journal, 10, 143 - 155.