
**Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa
Chesterton**

Report for:
Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa
Chesterton
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 1TE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to set out the controls to be implemented during site clearance, in order to avoid contravention of current legislation and discharge Condition 5 of the planning decision notice (Cherwell District Council ref: 15/01068/F) which states;

'Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, including any demolition and any works of site clearance, a method statement to avoid harm to amphibians or reptiles during construction shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the strategy shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.'

Reason - To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy ESD10 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.'

Although the site does not provide suitable terrestrial habitat for any great crested newts (or other species of herpetofauna¹, as they are known to be present within the nearby pond it is recommended that site clearance works are carried out adopting Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs). In accordance with this precautionary approach, the works will be completed under an ecological watching brief, as detailed within this Method Statement.

A copy of this Method Statement will be circulated to key site staff and other site operatives so that they are fully aware of the sensitivity of the works and of the possibility of encountering great crested newts and a copy will be kept on site.

This approach is based on the following assessment:

- No great crested newts have been recorded on the development site (during terrestrial hand searches) and the area provides unsuitable terrestrial habitat (area is regularly cut resulting in a short sward and is relatively flat and featureless, lacking any key features such as compost piles, log piles and/or rubble piles, that great crested newts could use for sheltering and/or overwintering).
- The pond and its immediate surroundings have a number of opportunities for sheltering and overwintering, including the banks of the pond. It is therefore considered that the majority of the great crested newts will be concentrated within these areas.

LEGISLATION

All amphibian species have some level of protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2004*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection', is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

¹ Herpetofauna includes both amphibians and reptiles. Although the controls to be implemented in this method statement focus on great crested newts, any species of herpetofauna that may be found during the site clearance exercise will be caught and released within adjacent habitat outside the 'construction area'.

CONTROL METHODS TO BE APPLIED

The works will only be carried out when animals are active. Although activity is weather and temperature dependent, great crested newts along with other species of amphibians are usually fully active from March to October, inclusive, and will remain active as long as there is not a prolonged cold spell and/or the night-time temperature does not drop below 5°C. All works will be directly supervised by a suitably experienced and licenced ecologist/accredited agent.

Prior to the works all site personnel will be given a toolbox talk to inform them about the potential presence of great crested newts and the legal protection they are afforded (a copy of a generic toolbox talk for great crested newts is attached at Appendix A).

The existing vegetation within the 'construction zone' is dominated by regularly cut amenity grassland, resulting in a short sward and this management has been continued to ensure that the habitat remains sub-optimal.

The 'construction zone' - the area of the proposed works including a site compound and access route - will be clearly demarcated on the ground and fenced off using Heras fencing (or equivalent). In order to separate the construction zone from the adjacent land, temporary amphibian proof fencing will be installed **outside of the heras fencing** (as shown on Figure 1). The fence will incorporate the new access road to be created and will contain two amphibian-proof gates to allow access on to the , which will be closed at the end of each day to prevent great crested newts gaining access to the site. The fence will be maintained in good condition until the development has been completed at which point it will be fully removed. A specification for the fencing has been attached at Appendix B.

A hand search of the area will be carried out, with any natural or artificial refugia found, such as logs, stones, rocks etc., lifted and checked for sheltering animals before being removed from the site. Where practicable, suitable material will be used as habitat enhancement measures within adjacent habitat.

After the on-site ecologist is satisfied with the above works, he/she will supervise the final site clearance (destructive search). This will involve the removal of all remaining ground vegetation leaving only bare earth. As with standard practice, a 360° excavator will be used for this purpose, with the turf/topsoil being placed carefully to one side. Particular care will be required during this exercise, which will be closely monitored by the on-site ecologist.

Any animals found will be caught and released into suitable adjacent habitat, outside the construction zone. In the unlikely event that any great crested newts are encountered, all works will stop and the Council's Ecologist and Natural England consulted to agree appropriate action.

All interested parties will be kept informed of the works while they are being carried out, and a brief summary report will be issued when the works are complete. The on-site ecologist will keep a daily log of the works along with a series of photographs for reference.

A daily check of the amphibian proof fencing will be completed by the Site Manager and any repairs completed as soon as possible.

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Figure 1



KEY

-  Amphibian-proof Fencing
-  Amphibian-proof Gate
-  Heras fencing (or equivalent)
-  Construction Zone

Notes

The amphibian-proof fence will be installed around the construction zone and maintained in a good condition.

Site clearance works will be supervised by a licenced ecologist/accredited agent.

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
<p>PROJECT</p> <p>153312 Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa Chesterton</p>			
<p>TITLE</p> <p>Mitigation Plan</p>			
		<p>AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX</p> <p>T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aee-llp.com www.aee-llp.com</p>	
Scale	Date July '16	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	Drawn SC	Chkd. JDT	Figure 1

Appendix A
Toolbox Talk (Great Crested Newts)

TOOLBOX TALK: GREAT CRESTED NEWTS (GCNs)

Key Contacts

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042

Did you know?

- Great crested newts or **GCNs** are the largest and rarest species of newt found in the UK.
- Significant population declines, mostly due to habitat loss, has seen European and UK law introduced to protect GCNs.
- The UK is one of the final strongholds of GCNs, with an estimated population of 400,000 across the country.
- GCNs are amphibians and so use ponds for breeding, but spend much of their lives on land.
- For their survival, a link between a suitable breeding pond and terrestrial habitat is essential.
- During winter, GCNs will hibernate on land and may not wake up if disturbed. This makes them vulnerable to site works, especially during winter months.
- GCNs can be found in a range of habitats, be it rural or urban.
- GCNs, like many amphibians, are nocturnal and are consequently rarely seen during the day time.
- The lifespan of a GCN can be up to 15 years.

Identification

- GCNs may be found in a number of places around a site. When on land they tend to favour log/wood, stone and rubble piles. Breeding ponds are mainly medium-sized ponds, however, ditches and even large puddles may be used.
- Mature GCNs may grow up to about 17 cm long.
- Most of their skin is dark brown or black and warty in texture/appearance with an orange/yellow and black pattern on their tummy.
- During the breeding season adult males have a jagged crest running along their back, which only becomes clearly visible when in the water.

Legislation

- All amphibian species have some level of protection under UK law.
- **GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.

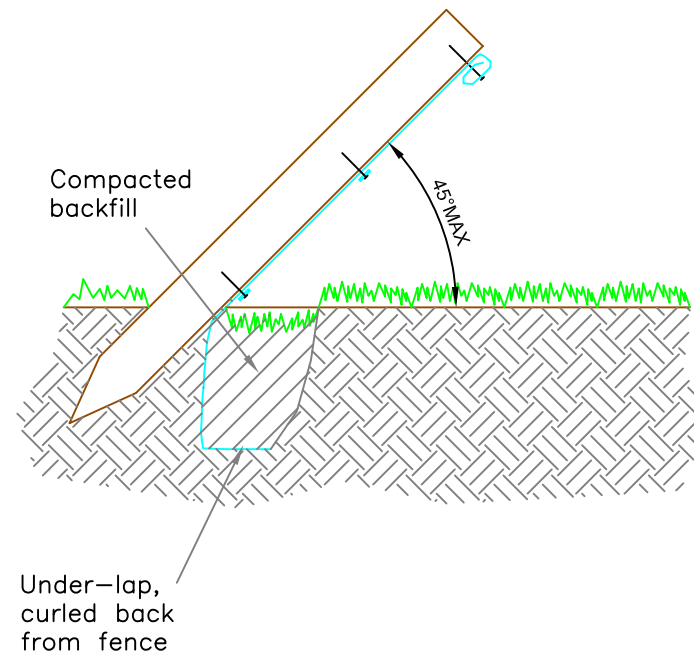
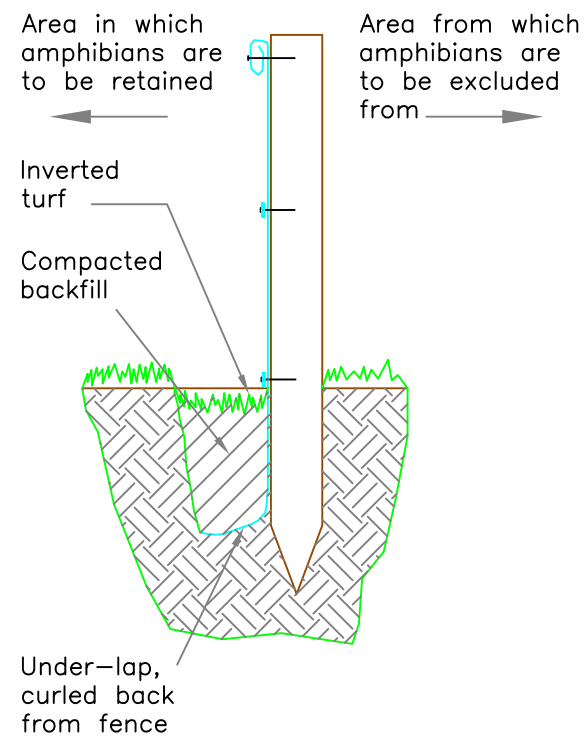
Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that as GCNs move within the terrestrial habitat or between breeding ponds that they could be encountered during site works.
- **If any GCNs are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 1. If GCNs are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately**, with any GCNs left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 2. Site operatives must not intentionally handle GCNs.
 3. During works, operatives must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with GCNs.
 4. Care must be taken when moving logs, stones or rubble, or when clearing areas near to ponds. These are favoured habitats for GCNs and they may be sheltering within them.
 5. Stockpiling of materials is only permitted within designated areas.

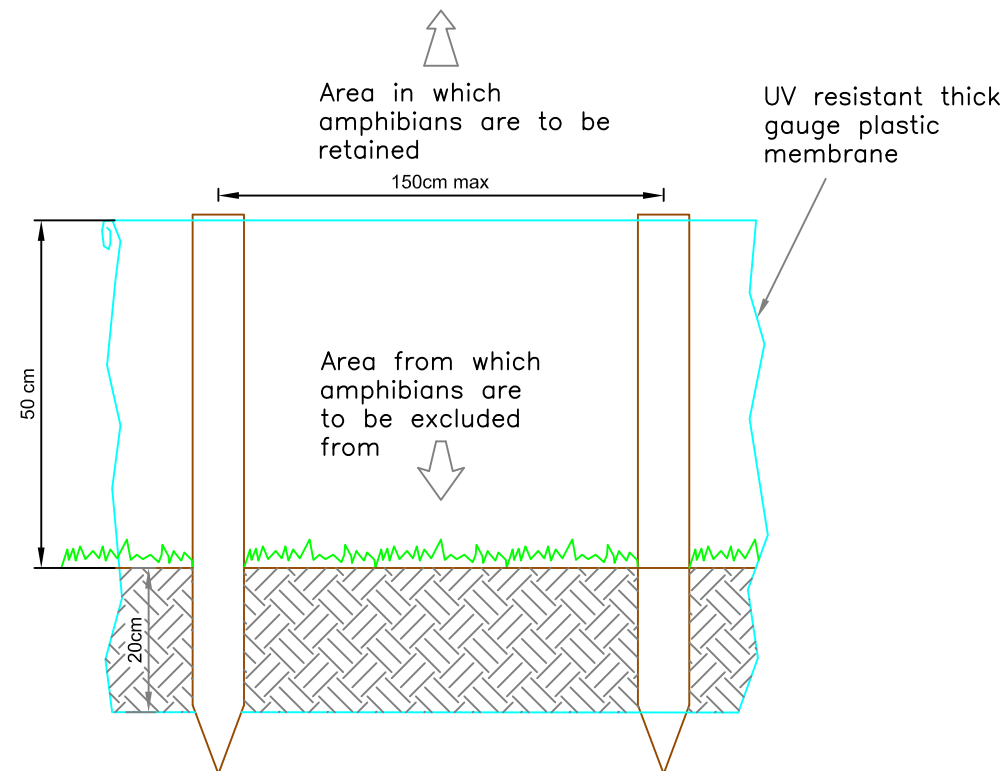
These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You are not expected to be able to identify GCNs or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**




Appendix B
Specification for Temporary Amphibian Proof Fencing



ONE-WAY FENCE



Rev.	Details	Drawn	Date
		Chkd.	
Project			
Bicester Hotel, Golf and Spa Chesterton			
Title			
Amphibian Proof Fencing Specifications			
		AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T:(01235) 536042 F:(01235) 523849 info@aae-llp.com www.aae-llp.com	
		Scale	Date
NTS	July '16	Appendix B	
	Drawn SC	Chkd. ARB	