

Herpetologic Ltd 2022

Date: 18th July 2022 (Version 1.2)

Project: TGF Barn, Friars Manor, Saffron Walden

Client: Brinkworth



Site name	TGF Barn, Friars Manor
Location	Tindon End Rd, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 2XT
Date of work	6 th July 2022
OS grid ref.	TL 61363 33726
What3Words	supreme.registers.bounded

Mitigation Method Statement

Brief Summary

- Visited the site under assessment on the 6th of July to inspect the environs around the proposed areas for swimming pool, refurbished/converted barn, bin store and potential ground source heat pump
- The main ponds on the property were found to have reasonable amounts of water and it was explained that restoration works on the ponds have taken place in the winter of 2021
- Concerns were raised with the potential impact and possible trouble for this work etc
- I countered that immediately and were looking at the ponds which the first two were teeming with invertebrate life and in the larger pond good growth of stonewort were seen in the cleared areas of the pond
- The garden area is generally unsuitable newt habitat with pockets of suitable habitats such as hedges, trees, bushes, logs, and telegraph poles/railway sleepers etc
- Great crested newts were detected within two of the on-site ponds during eDNA surveys in 2022
- The pond located just off site was found to be negative.
- The pond was found to be dry, silted up and shaded by trees (see photos)
- The development proposals do not pose a significant risk to the conservation status of the newt population in the area.
- The use of exclusion fencing, habitat manipulation (gardening) can reduce the likely discovery of terrestrial phase newts within the building/work areas thus not requiring a specific licence
- Habitat features which may provide shelter for terrestrial newts would need to be removed in staged habitat clearance under the guidance of a newt ecologist.
- A gap in the hedgerow will be closed providing ample opportunity to provide further terrestrial habitats for newts, snakes, mammals, and other animals using the boundary features of the site
- Maintaining the edge habitats allowing for migration of amphibians around the application site and keeping grass well-kept and mown will remove the need for licensing most of the project.
- If disturbance of terrestrial newts cannot be avoided, then a low impact licence would be recommended and guided by the on site ecologist.
- Pond restoration has already occurred on 2/3 of the pond resource on site – mitigation for the project would include suitable management of the ponds on site with a view to ensuring that the ponds continue to provide a habitat for newts post development.
- Follow up field surveys in 2023 are recommended with ongoing monitoring throughout the project
- The development proposals would therefore provide a net benefit for great crested newts and local biodiversity through advice and management plans for the project
- The last pond requires some management which would improve the pond for amphibians and other wildlife and would help to provide a suitable viewing area for the owner of the property.
- A pond management plan can be prepared to help the owner to management the site for wildlife which has already started on site

Aims

- To assess the situation regarding the status of great crested newts at TGF Barn, Friars Manor in Saffron Walden, Essex
- To assess the terrestrial and aquatic habitats in context of the planned proposals at the site
- To assess the likely impact of the proposals on the conservation status of great crested newts at the site
- To provide a mitigation method statement which meets the obligations under the relevant legislation, guidance, and policies protecting great crested newts in planning proposals

Methods - Site visit

The TGF Barn was visited on the 6th July to assess the various habitats on site and the proposals in relation to how best to protect and conserve the newt colony found to be present in the area.

The owner/client accompanied the surveyor and explained various aspects of the proposals including the renovation of the barn to create a passive house and potentially removing the ground source heat pump from the lawn.

Photographs were taken to illustrate the various habitats on site and where mitigation measures can be adopted to protect the newt population on site while the development is progressed.

Results

The site has three ponds which are being managed by the landowner/client who has provided a benefit to local aquatic wildlife. The ponds in the ownership of the proposals are assessed as below average/average but from the visit I would suggest that the ponds have a higher suitability for great crested newts thanks to the pond works described and assessed on site this July.

Most of the site is a maintained garden – with clear areas where newts would not reside for any length of time. The newt population would be focussed within the edge habitats around the site and any suitable feature on site.

The photographs in the following pages illustrate the conditions on the site and the recommendations provide how best to protect the newt population as part of the planning proposals for the site.

Enhancements to the pond resource on site was already evident on site – important part of newt conservation in Essex is the restoration of existing ponds across the county and the district.

Mitigation strategies based on habitat management and protection measures on site guided by experienced newt ecologists from Herpetologic Ltd would enable the development to proceed while maintaining the conservation status of newts in the local area.

Photographs



Pond 4 – Dry, silted up and overgrown on the 6th July 2022



Pond 3 – potential improvements/enhancements to be made to the pond including cutting back trees and allowing light into the pond. Off setting any minor impacts or disturbance to individual newts (which can be licensed through LICL)



Lawn areas largely unsuitable newt habitat in the central areas – mowing would maintain these areas – the interface between structures and soil – for example telegraph poles, and railway sleepers set into the ground may have sheltering newts in the autumn and winter.



Pond 1 illustrating the recent dredging works – opening up the seed bank, letting in light and importantly keeping water levels up benefiting local biodiversity and the newt metapopulation



Lawn areas should be maintained through mowing to keep newts out of the way of proposals



Driveways can be designed to allow newts and other wildlife to cross during the evening and night



Increasing the habitat suitability of the on site ponds by guided management is key to conserving newts in the area



Trees and bushes should be retained as much as possible

Recommendations

It is recommended that as far as possible Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) should be adopted to maintain the newt population on site during the development proposals being completed on site. In this sort of habitat – a garden habitat the regular maintenance of lawns, removal of debris or natural materials within the lawns and move them to the edges to provide habitats within the hedgerows

The area around the barn may provide hiding places for newts so there should be consideration towards registering the site under the Low Impact Class Licence (LICL) where newts need to be removed or are expected to be within habitats which will be removed.

A licence would be required if it is felt likely that newts would be found within natural refuges – tree roots, railway sleepers and other materials which newts may shelter within. The interface between concrete and bricks and soil can also be occupied by individual newts depending on the environs around those areas (for example rough grass etc)

The registration of the site would be after planning permission has been granted. The provision of a Map showing all the ponds surveyed, +ve and -ve for GCN, along with the impacts, habitats and the mitigation/compensation required would be prepared and then sent to Natural England with an application form and charge form.

The use of exclusion fencing can be employed to maintain newts within protected area of the site outside the development proposals. Newts would remain able to migrate to and from their breeding sites and their overwintering sites.

The management of the ponds on a periodic basis – on a rotational manner would help to conserve the newt population while maintaining old ponds – it was reported that the ponds were very old as are many ponds in Essex. These ponds are very valuable for wildlife and amphibians.

A management plan for these ponds should be implemented with Herpetologic Ltd providing advice on what to do next on Pond 3 etc. The pond areas was highlighted as an area where no works are planned so these areas could be planted up with bushes, hedgerows and other features with a view to 'rewild' the property.

Landscaping of the site would provide a benefit to local wildlife, amphibians, mammals, and biodiversity. Specifically, areas of the site can be maintained for the purpose of providing refuge for newts and other amphibians – hidden log piles, longer grassland etc can be used to keep newts within the close range of the ponds on site.

The closing up of the entrance identified on the plans means that further connections can be maintained around the site through the hedgerow planting on a purpose-built hibernation bank for local wildlife in the area – including mammals such as hedgehogs, newts, toads, frogs, and invertebrates.

Monitoring and Management

Any mitigation strategy should have a robust monitoring and management plan post development. The owners are going to be living at the property after the development has been completed.

The site is also a garden environment which has plenty of space for semi natural habitats as indicated on the site visit. The maintenance of the hedgerows would help provide habitat corridors around the site while suitable features can be designed into the landscaping to benefit newts and other wildlife.

Monitoring surveys post development would be recommended to keep a tab on the newt population returning to the ponds to breed. Spring surveys using traditional field surveys and eDNA can provide updated information on the status of the newt population.

The monitoring and habitat assessments of the ponds would inform future management of the ponds – it is recommended that 1/3 of a pond resource is managed in any one season. The timing of management would be timed outside of the bird nesting season (managing trees and overhanging vegetation) and during the winter (for dredging out pond silt). Two of the ponds have been desilted much like what is happening in Essex as part of the District Level Licensing scheme.

Roughly a 1/3 of the pond resource has been managed in 2021. The next pond to be managed would be pond 3. Cutting back trees around the pond would open the vista of the pond and allow light into the pond to promote aquatic plants. The south facing side of the pond for example would be the first section to work on and then rotate around the pond when required.

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Management	P3		P1		P2	
Surveys	-	Yes		Yes		Yes

Table 1 Management and Survey Programme as part of the proposals at the TGF Barn, Saffron Walden, Essex

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Date: 13th July 2022

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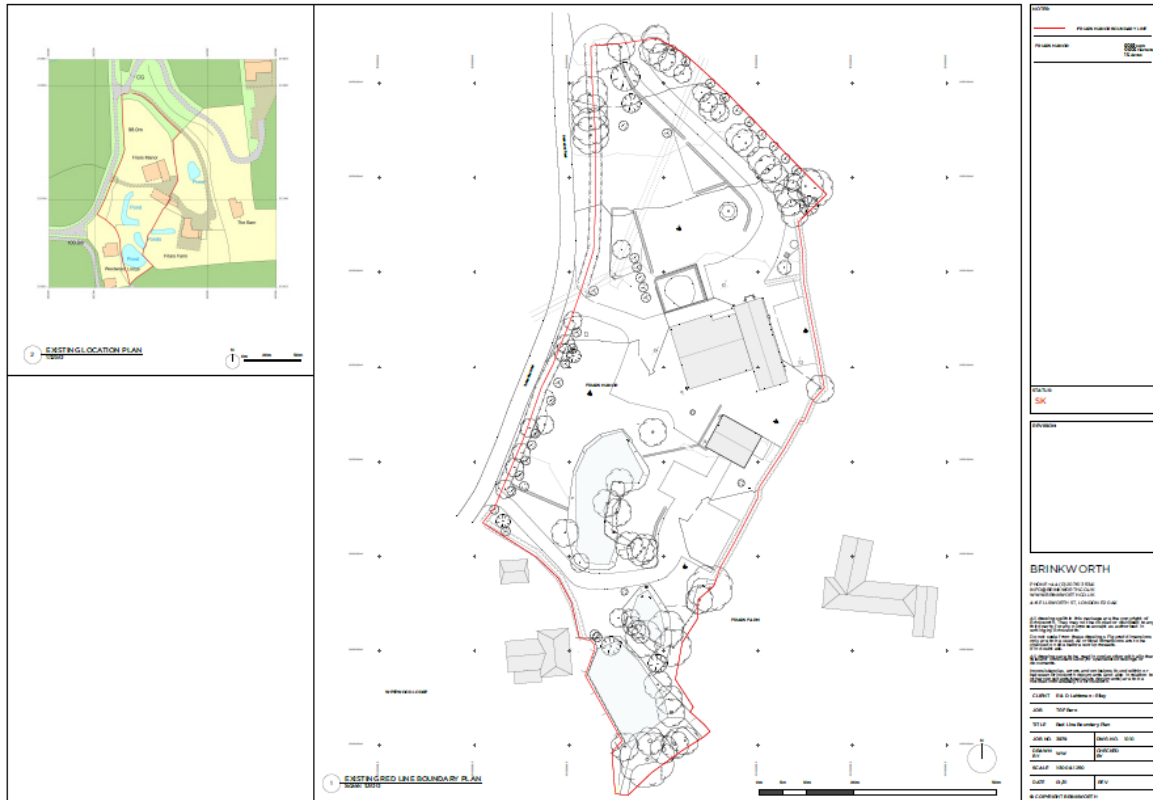
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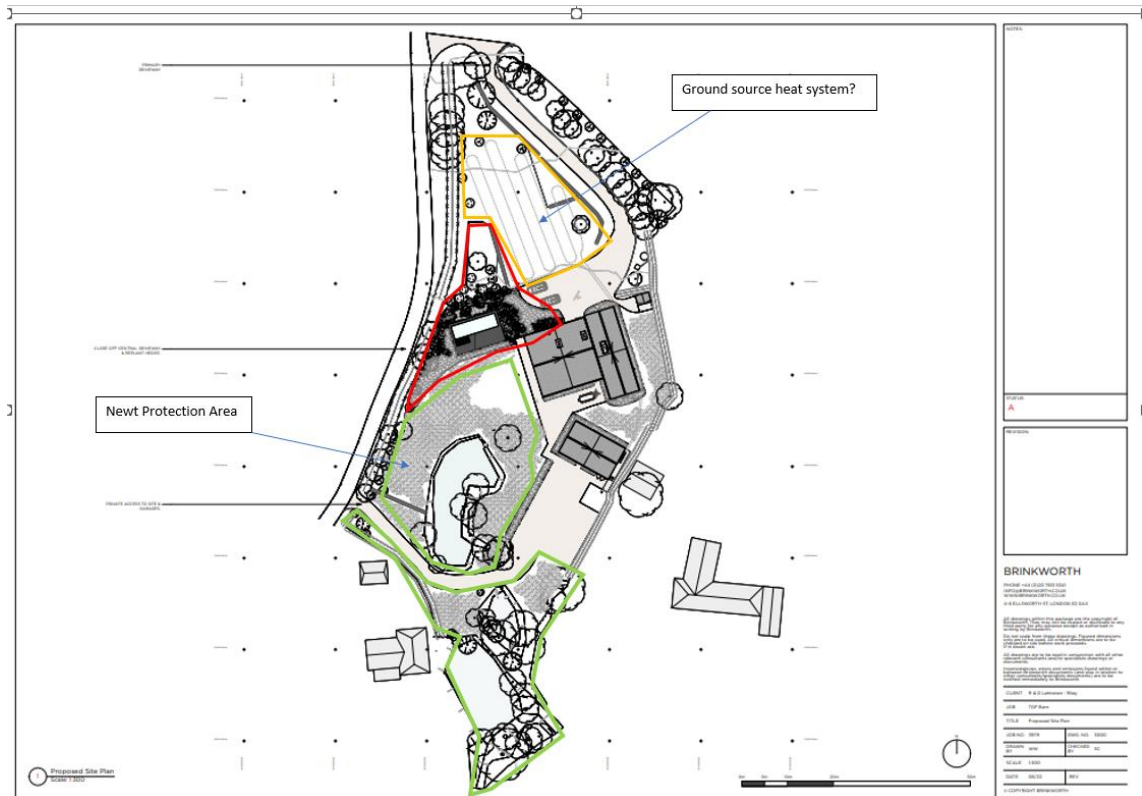
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Appendices - Plans



Existing plan of the site



Newt protection measures would require areas to be off limits to development related works – the swimming pool is in an area which may require licensing