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Ecological Surveys • Habitat Management • Arboricultural Surveys • Vegetation Clearance

Mr Alan Smith
Snell David Ltd - Architects
Scutches Barn
17 High Street
Whittlesford
Cambridge CB22 4LT

4th July 2022

Dear Mr Smith,

Letter Report re: Impact Appraisal for Great Crested Newts arising from a proposed extension at Pratt's Green Farmhouse, Kirtling, Cambridgeshire.

Author's Qualifications

This report has been prepared by Steve Parnwell BA (Hons) MCIEEM FLS FRSA. He is the holder of, inter alia, a Natural England Level Two great crested newt Class Survey Licence, a great crested newt Dewsbury Box Trap Licence (covered under a Science Education and Conservation Licence), a great crested newt Possession Licence and is a Registered Consultant for great crested newt Low Impact Class Licences. He has held numerous European Protected Species Licences (EPSL's) and is the founding Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Amphibian and Reptile Group (CPARG). In the thirty plus years he has been dealing with protected species in a professional capacity, he has sat on various Natural England Consultation Committees, he is the former Chair of the national Multi-Agency Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Data and Information Sharing Working Group and is the founding Chair of the Cambridgeshire Multi-Agency Partnership Against Wildlife and Environmental Crime (CPAWEC).

Introduction

It is proposed to undertake the construction of an extension to an existing dwelling at Pratt's Green Farmhouse, Kirtling, Cambridgeshire.

MKA Ecology (MKA 2021) has previously undertaken a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site in February 2021 and identified one onsite water body that was assessed as having the potential to support great crested newts (GCN). The MKA report recommended that follow up analysis for presence/absence for GCN eDNA should be undertaken.

In 2022, Greenwillows Associates was commissioned to undertake, inter alia, the eDNA assessment of the on-site water body in support of the application. This letter report details the outcome of a site visit

to undertake the water sampling for laboratory analysis and includes an assessment of likely impacts on GCN's posed by the proposed construction.

Survey Results

On Friday 24th June 2022 Greenwillows Associates ecologists attended the site to undertake the collection of water samples from the on-site water body for submission to a scientific laboratory to test for presence of GCN eDNA.

Upon arrival it was found that the water body was dry and succumbing to terrestrial vegetation, rendering it impossible to take samples for laboratory analysis.

Scrutiny of the MKA report shows that on the 3rd of February 2021, the target on-site water body supported a very shallow water level with some emergent vegetation. This depth of water is assessed by Steve Parnwell of Greenwillows Associates as being suboptimal to support a breeding population of GCN, and appears to be more of a seasonally ephemeral wet ditch than a pond per se. This is supported by the lack of water noted during the Greenwillows Associates visit on 24th June 2022

Due cognisance has been taken of MKA's information contained in their PEA regarding GCN records within the wider environment. The nearest pond with GCN presence recorded is 350 metres from the application site, and for a small development such as the current application, the zone of influence is more likely to be 250m. Research sponsored by Natural England has shown that most newts within terrestrial capture programmes are found within 50m of a pond with few animals captured at distances greater than 100m (Cresswell and Whitworth 2004).

The only water body within the 250 radius of the application site is the on-site water body which, as previously noted, is seasonally ephemeral and unlikely, in most years, to retain sufficient water for GCNs to complete their metamorphosis life cycle to achieve their full air breathing terrestrial stage. Taking due regard of this, and the relatively small construction footprint, it is assessed that the likely impact on resting/sheltering/ breeding GCNs is negligible.

Notwithstanding the above, several ponds occur just outside the 250m potential zone of influence and there is some potential for them to migrate between those ponds as noted by MKA. If migrating newts become caught up in construction activities such as trapped in excavations or sheltering in spoil heaps/stored materials, there is a potential risk of individual newts being killed or injured. Therefore it is recommended that reasonable precautionary measures should be included as part of the planning conditions.

Such measures should include:

Undertaking a fingertip search of the construction footprint by an experienced herpetologist and then maintaining the footprint as either a very short sward or bare earth inimical to amphibians - NB in the unlikely event GCNs are found at this stage, then works should cease until a licence from Natural England had been obtained.

Once the site had been reduced to an unfavourable state to support GCNs, then an amphibian exclusion fence should be erected around the entire construction footprint to include sufficient area to store all materials, plant, equipment and excavated soil, and any welfare/temporary

office cabins. As the site is currently assessed as unlikely to support GCNs the question of damage/destruction of, or obstruction to, resting/shelter habitat does not arise and as such no licence is required for the above precautionary measures.

- Monthly compliance monitoring visits by the retained ecologist should be undertaken to ensure the fence is retained *in situ* and maintained in a fit for purpose state for the duration of the works. Any significant breaches and/or noncompliance with the above recommendations will be reported to the LPA for appropriate action.

Conclusions

The site is currently unlikely to support resting/sheltering/breeding GCNs but there is a low risk that migrating newts could potentially cross the site and become caught up in construction activities, with the concomitant risk of killing/ injuring GCNs. However, provided the elementary precautions outlined above are adhered to, then the residual risk to GCNs is assessed as negligible.

Yours Sincerely



Steve Parnwell BA (Hons) MCIEEM FLS FRSA

Principal Consultant

References

Cresswell, W., Whitworth, R. (2004) An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. English Nature Research Reports Number 576, English Nature, Peterborough.

MKA Ecology (2021) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment 912 Pratts Green Farmhouse Kirtling

Photos of on-site water body 22nd June 2022

