# APPENDIX 4 METHOD STATEMENT REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES (RAMS)

## Introduction

1.1 The proposed development is small-scale; it involves the clearance of an area of hardstanding currently used to temporarily store machinery and materials for use on the golf course and the construction of a concrete and metal building 18.3m x 15.24m x 4.3m tall. The area is currently subject to periodic clearance and storage of materials which are under the control of the Club.

1.2 The edges of the site are defined by earth and rubble bunds supporting ruderal tall herb vegetation and alder trees. The trees will not be affected by the building and, where possible, the inner edge of the bund will remain untouched. Access to the site for materials will be via the Club car park, and the existing road and entrance into the maintenance area which is in daily use.

1.3 It is the intention of the Golf Club to undertake and complete the work before the start of the playing season in mid April. Site clearance will be undertaken as soon as possible once planning has been granted, and is likely to be outside the bird breeding season (March-July).

1.4 The greatest potential to disturb any great crested newt (and other species, namely other amphibian species and hedgehog) is, therefore, in the clearance of the wood and rubble piles on the areas of hardstanding, and in small areas where the boundary bund may need to be excavated to accommodate the new structure. This will become apparent once the site is cleared and the footprint clearly marked out.

## The Protected Status of Great Crested Newt

1.5 Great crested (or warty) newts are protected under the WCA, which has also been amended by various legislation including the CRoW and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and this legislation is applicable to England and Wales.

1.6 Great crested newts are listed on Schedule 5 of the WCA and are, therefore, subject to some the provisions of Section 9 which, with the amendments, make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection (S9:4b).

- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt (S9:4c).

1.7 There are additional offences in relation to buying and selling (S9:5) any live or dead animal of this species or anything derived from them.

1.8 Great crested newts are also listed under Annexes IIa and IVa of EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as the ‘Habitats Directive’. Inclusion on Annex IVa means they are consequently identified as European Protected Species (EPS) and protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Conservation of

Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 state that a person commits an offence if they:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species,
- deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in such a way as –
    - to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear their young, or
    - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate, or
    - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
    - deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or
    - damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.

1.9 Under these Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, whether the animal is in occupation or not, and protection extends to all life stages of the animal in question. There are additional offences relating to possession, control and sale of a live or dead great crested newt or part of such an animal.

1.10 In addition, great crested newt was listed as a 'Priority Species' under UK BAP. UK BAP Priority Species are also referred to as 'species of principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales within Section 74 of the CRoW Act 2000, and Sections 41 (England) and 42 (Wales) of the NERC. In Planning Policy Statement 9, local authorities in England are required to take measures to protect the habitats of these species from further decline, protect the species from the adverse effect of development and refuse planning permission for development that harms these species unless the need for, or benefit of, the development clearly outweighs that harm. The commitment to preserving, restoring or enhancing biodiversity is further emphasized for England and Wales in Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006.

1.11 Please note: the above text provides a brief summary of the legislation in relation to great crested newt for England and Wales and the original Acts, Regulations and any amendments should be referred to for the precise wording.

## Identifying Great Crested Newt

1.12 The following is based upon information given in 'Britain's Reptiles and Amphibians' (Inns 2009).

1.13 Adult great crested newts are approximately 100mm to 130mm in length (while the more common smooth newt is typically no greater than 80mm in length).

1.14 Great crested newts are predominantly black/very dark in colour with orange markings on their underside and a dark throat with white speckles (smooth newt are paler brown with brown spots (male) or olive brown (female) with a pale underside, black spotted throat and some orange on the belly).

1.15 Great crested newts have a rough, warty skin (smooth newts have smooth skin with no warts).

1.16 Breeding male great crested newts have a distinctive ragged-edged crest running along their back with a definite break in the crest between the back and the tail (breeding male smooth newts have a smaller, wavy-edged crest which is continuous along the back and tail). Out of water the crest becomes flattened.

1.17 When not breeding, the crest of the male great crested newt is largely absent and the white stripe on the side of the tail is more useful for identification. The underbelly marking in male and females remain consistent throughout the year.

## Summary of the Habitat Requirements of Great Crested Newt

1.18 The great crested newt is an amphibian and relies on waterbodies for breeding, typically ponds but also ditches, canals and other still or slow-moving water. They will, however, spend much of their time on land when not breeding.

1.19 In winter months great crested newts hibernate in habitat that provides a suitable cover along with relatively stable temperatures and moist but not wet conditions, such as in mammal burrows, within wood or stone piles, under refugia (including debris) and within the crevices amongst larger tree roots.

1.20 In the spring and summer period when the animals are active, great crested newts will move between favoured breeding ponds and nearby suitable terrestrial habitat, such as dense vegetation and refuges (for shelter) or shorter vegetation (foraging areas where invertebrate prey can be found). In early spring the animals will be moving from their winter hibernation areas to their breeding areas, and moving back again in late autumn.

1.21 The following RAMs provide a means by which the risk of disturbing or harming any great crested newt potentially on the development site is appropriately managed during site operations.

## Avoidance Measures

1.22 All Contractors/golf course employees working on site will attend a ‘tool-box talk’ given by a licensed great crested newt surveyor, including information on great crested newt and slow-worm identification, and the RAMs that will be followed on site during construction works (Appendix 5)

1.23 A laminated summary of the identification of great crested newts and what to do if they are uncovered (i.e. contact numbers, etc.) will be provided to the Contractors to carry with them while working on site (Appendix 5).

1.24 Where rubble piles, debris or other features on site that may be used by great crested newts are to be removed, these will be clearly identified on site to the Contractor by the Ecologist. A ‘destructive search’ approach will be used on these features, whereby the overseeing Ecologist directly supervises the gradual removal of the feature with careful on-going inspection for great crested newts, other amphibians, slow-worms and hedgehogs. The materials would be removed from the development site and re-stacked elsewhere as required.

1.25 Should any hedgehogs, reptiles or common amphibians be uncovered, they will be carefully moved by hand away from the development area and relocated to a suitable site within the golf course. This will be undertaken by the Ecologist. There are a number of piles of rubble/soil/wood within the golf course boundary which would act as hibernaculum. The primary receptor site would be within the scrub area adjacent to Pool 1 or, if more appropriate, the area where the materials had been transferred.

1.26 If great crested newts are discovered at any time, works will cease and the requirement for a mitigation licence or works under a low impact class licence will be reviewed by the Ecologist. In particular, it should be noted that if hibernating great crested newts are discovered they will need to be left *in situ* with shelter/protection, and dismantling of other possible refugia must also stop.

1.27 Once the most likely areas for newts have been cleared it may not be necessary for an Ecologist to be on site at all times. If the Ecologist is not on site when a great crested newt is found (or suspected to be found), then the Contractor must stop all work and immediately notify the Ecologist for further advice.

1.28 If other species (i.e. other amphibians, slow-worms and hedgehogs) are found, the Ecologist would also be contacted for advice on moving the animals and on the best receptor site for the species found. The Ecologist will attend site if any newt is found to confirm the accurate identification of species.

1.29 Once the site is cleared there will be no further storage of material on this area of the site until the building has been constructed.

1.30 Construction of the footings will be undertaken as rapidly as possible, and if any foundation excavations left open at the end of a day will be covered over with plywood and the edges sealed with sand or soil. Excavations will be checked by the Contractor for animals each morning prior to further works. If amphibians, reptiles or hedgehogs are found the Ecologist will be informed. Common amphibians (frogs and toads) may be moved by the Contractor to the agreed receptor site, but the Ecologist will attend site if any newt is found to confirm the accurate identification of species. Removal of newts from the excavations should only be undertaken by the overseeing Ecologist and, in the unlikely event of it being a great crested newt, should only be moved if in imminent danger, otherwise works should cease and the need for a GCN licence will be reviewed by the Ecologist.

1.31 The Contractor/golf course employees are expressly forbidden to handle any great crested newts (or potential great crested newts) uncovered during construction works.

1.32 If at any time great crested newts are discovered on site during construction works then advice will be provided on how to proceed safely. Works will need to be suspended whilst a decision is made on whether a mitigation licence or a low impact class licence is required to allow work to proceed.

## *General Working Protocol*

1.33 The external boundary of the development site will be marked out by the Contractor using a plastic mesh barrier and fencing pins (or a similar permeable barrier which amphibians can pass through) on the north and eastern boundaries, to ensure minimal disturbance to the existing bunds, trees and vegetation.

1.34 The barrier would be set at a minimum of 3m from the trunk of any trees within the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) on the eastern boundary of the site. This has been calculated using the British Standard 5837 and the root protection area (RPA) which is calculated by multiplying the diameter of the tree at breast height (0.25m) by 12.

1.35 It is not anticipated that the trees surrounding the development site will be significantly affected by the construction of the building.

1.36 During the excavation of the building's footings, all debris will be removed from site and will not be spread on the adjacent bunds or banks. This is to prevent disturbance to potential hibernating animals within the bunds and to prevent disturbance to the trees and associated vegetation, particularly on the eastern boundary which is adjacent to the LWS.

1.37 All construction materials bought to site will remain on pallets where possible or stacked as far as possible from the development area to prevent any animals using the sand, gravel and other materials as an alternative refuge.

1.38 Construction should not impinge in any way on the LWS and there will be no materials, debris or rubbish outside the mesh barrier at any time during the works.

**References**

British Standards Institution, 2012. *BS5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations*. BSI.

Inns, H., 2009. *Britain's Amphibians and Reptiles. A Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Great Britain, Ireland and the Channel Islands*. WildGuides Ltd.