
From: Sue Hooton - Principal Ecological Consultant [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 August 2024 17:26
To: Nicola.Pettifer
Cc: Gen Broad - Ecological Consultant; Adrian.Smith; Guy.Everest
Subject: RE: DC/23/0406 - Land West of Ashington

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Hi Nic

Gen is just back from sick leave and still recovering from Covid so I've agreed to reply to your query.

I have copied in Adrian and Guy as you know we do not usually provide comments on GCN but we have been instructed to leave comments on this European Protected Species to the [NatureSpace Partnership](#). However as you are keen to understand if the survey effort is appropriate and avoids the need for a GCN licence, we are happy to advise on its sufficiency to support a lawful decision.

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) for GCN (PEA Table 5.6) is not a survey method as set out in [Government Standing Advice for GCN](#) but the PEA confirms that detailed presence/likely absence surveys were undertaken in 2022 (this data is within Natural England "4 seasons" lifespan) – see snip below from Standing Advice):

Survey data provided by the developer should be no older than 4 survey seasons. The data must reflect the status of the site. If the development is predicted to have a negative effect on GCN, it's important to ask for recent data to make sure it's accurate.

We are satisfied that the GCN survey effort meets the requirements and agree that a high coverage of survey effort has been possible to enable an accurate assessment of the likely absence of GCN from the site. We note that 2 offsite ponds were not surveyed due to access restrictions although the majority of ponds in and around the site have been subject to full presence/absence surveys. As a GCN licence is not necessary, there is no reason for NatureSpace to be contacted by the applicant.

However, we recommend that, as mobile species are likely to be present in the locality, precautionary mitigation measures should be secured by a condition of any consent to cover the construction period to avoid impacts on protected and Priority species e.g. Hedgehog, Common Toad.

I hope this helps you with any GCN questions at Committee.

Best wishes
Sue

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From: Nicola.Pettifer [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 5:35 PM
To: Gen Broad - Ecological Consultant [REDACTED]
Subject: DC/23/0406 - Land West of Ashington

CAUTION: This is an external email.

Dear Gen

Many thanks for the revised Ecological response for this site, which takes in a new attenuation pond location. I'll be requesting the relevant information from the applicants once I've gone through all the consultation responses and updates, but I wanted to clarify the Great Crested Newt situation with you. As this case was received before we joined the district licence scheme (with NatureSpace), the PEA will rely on surveys etc of nearby ponds for assessment on likely GCN impact (and relevant mitigations) through the 'old' approach.

Reading through their original Ecological Appraisal (Feb 2023), they've carried out surveys of the ponds and found that the species is 'considered to be reasonably likely to be absent from the site....', which appears to have been accepted as part of the original Ecological consultation response in May 2023. I wanted to clarify this as this is likely to be picked up at committee. Extract from the first Ecological Report:

Table 5.6. HSI survey results.

Pond	Suitability Indices										HSI Score	Suitability
	SI 1 Location	SI 2 Pond Area	SI 3 Pond Drying	SI 4 Water Quality	SI 5 Shade	SI 6 Water Fowl	SI 7 Fish	SI 8 Ponds	SI 9 Terrestrial Habitat	SI 10 Macrophytes		
Onsite Ponds												
P1	1	0.1	0.5	0.33	1	1	0.33	0.82	0.67	0.9	0.55	Below Average
P2	1	0.92	1	0.67	1	0.67	0.01	0.82	0.33	0.4	0.70	Poor
Offsite Ponds												
P5	1	0.95	1	0.67	1	1	1	0.82	0.67	0.5	0.84	Excellent
P6	1	1	0.1	0.67	1	0.67	1	0.82	0.33	0.6	0.61	Average
P7	1	0.45	1	0.33	0.4	1	1	0.82	0.33	0.85	0.65	Average
P8	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	1	0.67	0.01	0.82	0.67	0.5	0.78	Poor

5.7.4 In summary, of the six ponds which could be assessed, pond P5 was four 'excellent' potential to support Great Crested Newts, while ponds P6 and P7 were 'average', pond P1 was 'below average' and ponds P2 and P8 were 'poor'. The most potentially suitable terrestrial habitat within the site and the favourable HSI score for Great Crested Newt survey work was undertaken on ponds P1 and P2, as well as P8, during May and June 2022, the results of which are summarised in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. GCN survey results summary.

Pond Ref.	GCN Present	GCN Peak Count	GCN Population Size Class	Smooth Newt Peak Count	Palmar Newt Peak Count	Smooth/Palmar Newt Peak Count	Other amphibians
P1	N	-	-	0	0	0	x
P2	N	-	-	0	0	0	x
P5	N	-	-	0	0	0	x
P6	N	-	-	0	1	0	x
P7	N	-	-	0	0	0	x
P8	N	-	-	1	0	1	x
Summed across ponds		0	-				

5.7.5 **Evaluation and Assessment of Likely Effects.** No Great Crested Newts were recorded during the survey in any of the accessible ponds. As such, this species is considered reasonably likely to be absent from the site such that no specific safeguards are required with respect to this species.

Are we therefore satisfied that they've carried out all the relevant GCN surveys?

Kind regards

Nic

Nicola Pettifer

Senior Planning Officer

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