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Report for Land at 'The Glebe Project', Peckleton, Leicestershire

Extended Phase 1 Survey (including Protected Species)

Date of Report – 21st November 2008

Proprietors
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Ecological Assesment and Protected Species Survey

Name of Client: Mallory Park Fisheries, contact Roy Marlow

Address of Client: P.O. Box 5041**,** Leicester, LE8 6WR

Name of Agent: Landmark Planning, contact Phil Rowland

Address Of Agent: 10 Salisbury Road, Leicester LE1 7QR

Dates of Surveys: 20th November 2008,

Weather: 50% cloud, sunny, windy, bright, dry

Address of survey site: Land at 'The Glebe Project', Peckleton Common, Peckleton, Leicestershire

Grid Reference of survey sites: SK 4772 0121

Planning Application Numbers:

Name of Surveyor: A.B.Gibney BSc (Hons), MIEEM

Licences: Great Crested Newt 20082993 & Bat 20083261 issued by Natural England

Proposed Development

It is proposed to build a domestic residence on the proposed site.

Site Description

The site was within a complex of fishing lakes and ponds, on the edge of the village of Peckleton. The whole site was newly established, having been a potato field prior to 1996. The site of the proposed building was an earth bund, on which mown grass has become established. This grassland is species poor improved grassland (B4). There were also area of newly planted birch trees (*Betula* sp) [A1.1.2] growing on the bund. But these would in the main be unaffected by the proposed development.
Surrounding the proposed building site was a fishery, with several large lakes and smaller ponds (G1), all of which were heavily stocked with fish of various sizes. There was also some running water (G2) within the site, mostly between the various lakes and ponds. The majority of the land around the pools was a mix of mown grass, plantations (mainly deciduous) and areas of scrub (A2- Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*) and tall ruderals (C3.1). None of this area would be affected by the proposals.
Surrounding the fisheries, was mainly agricultural land, mainly arable (J1.1)

Aims of Study

The Curious Ecologists have been commissioned by Mallory Park Fisheries to undertake an ecological appraisal of the proposed building site, to particularly look for evidence of any protected species, or the likelihood of protected species utilising the site.

Survey Methodology:

Site Survey

The site was searched systematically for any signs of protected species. In particular:

1. The site was walked over and the habitats were described using Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology. In addition the land surrounding the site was describes using Phase 1 terminology.
2. Signs of birds were noted, particularly old nest sites, throughout the proposed building site.
3. The ground was searched for tracks, trails or signs (particularly droppings and food/feeding signs) of protected species.
4. Searches under logs and rocks were undertaken in all appropriate amphibian terrestrial habitat.
5. Badgers (*Meles meles*)- The area was searched for badger field signs. In particular areas were searched for footprints, dung pits, snuffle holes and runways through the vegetation. Boundary hedges, walls and fences were searched for latrines. Runways under boundary fences were searched for stray hairs.
6. The lakes, ponds, stream and ditches were searched for field signs of Water Voles (*Arvicola terrestris*), in particular their droppings, latrines, feeding stations, burrows, 'lawns', nests, runways and footprints.
7. An assessment was made of the suitability for great crested newt, of the lakes and ponds and associated terrestrial habitat that were within 500m of the proposed site,
8. Evidence of any other protected species was also noted.
9. All records from the above surveys were carefully logged.

Results:

Phase 1 Survey

Table 1: Phase 1 Habitats present on the proposed building site	
B4	Poor Improved grassland
J2.6	Dry ditch
J2.8	Earth Bank

Table 2: Phase 1 Habitats present on land adjoining the proposed building site	
A2.2	Scattered scrub
B4	Poor Improved grassland
C3.1	Tall ruderal
G1.1	Standing water
G2.1	Running water
J1.1	Arable farm land
J2.2.2	Defunct species poor hedgerow
J2.1.2	Intact species poor hedgerow
J2.6	Dry ditch
J2.8	Earth Bank
J3.6	Buildings
J4	Bare ground

Birds
Due to the time of year when the survey was undertaken, birds would not be nesting, however no old nests were found within the proposed building site.

Signs of Protected Species
There was no evidence of any protected species found on the proposed building site, however signs were found on the surrounding land.

Amphibians and Reptiles
There was no appropriate amphibian or reptile terrestrial habitat present on the proposed building site, no logs, rocks etc. There was also no piles of vegetation or similar which may provide an egg laying site for reptiles, particularly Grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*).

Badgers
The nearest sett to the proposed site was between 300 and 400m from the site. There did not appear to be any field signs of badgers in the near vicinity of the proposed site.

Water Voles
The nearest lakeside, which could support water voles was about 70m from the proposed building site. Evidence of water voles was found around the various lakes.

Great Crested Newts

Table 3. Habitat evaluation of waterbodies for great crested newt. Sites, which matched suitability criteria for a given attribute, are marked as favourable (+); those, which did not, are marked as unfavourable (-).

Survey Criteria	Optimal characteristics (from Langton *et al.* 2001)	Fishing Lakes						
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Terrestrial habitat	Close proximity to grassland, scrub, woodland, hedgerows *etc.*, for cover and feeding. Close proximity to other ponds.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Accessibility/ barriers	Easily accessible margins and few or no barriers to movement.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pond size	Small to medium sized (50-250m^2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water depth	Some deep and some shallow water. Seasonally dry ponds can be favoured.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water quality	Good water quality preferred.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shade/cover	Mixture of shaded and open areas.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marginal vegetation	Emergent vegetation for cover, shade and food sources. 25% cover is good.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foods	Healthy invertebrate fauna and amphibian spawn on which to feed.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aquatic vegetation	Submerged vegetation on which newts can lay eggs. 60% cover is good.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Predators: waterbirds	Absence of water birds (may predate and consume eggs and larvae).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Predators: fish	Absence of fish (may predate and consume eggs and larvae).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Survey Criteria	Optimal characteristics (from Langton *et al.* 2001)	Fish Breeding/ Growing on Ponds						
		H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Terrestrial habitat	Close proximity to grassland, scrub, woodland, hedgerows *etc.*, for cover and feeding. Close proximity to other ponds.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Accessibility/ barriers	Easily accessible margins and few or no barriers to movement.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pond size	Small to medium sized (50-250m^2)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Water depth	Some deep and some shallow water. Seasonally dry ponds can be favoured.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water quality	Good water quality preferred.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shade/cover	Mixture of shaded and open areas.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marginal vegetation	Emergent vegetation for cover, shade and food sources. 25% cover is good.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foods	Healthy invertebrate fauna and amphibian spawn on which to feed.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aquatic vegetation	Submerged vegetation on which newts can lay eggs. 60% cover is good.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Predators: waterbirds	Absence of water birds (may predate and consume eggs and larvae).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Predators: fish	Absence of fish (may predate and consume eggs and larvae).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Survey Criteria	Optimal characteristics (from Langton *et al.* 2001)	Fish Breeding/ Growing on Ponds			
		O	P	Q	R
Terrestrial habitat	Close proximity to grassland, scrub, woodland, hedgerows *etc.*, for cover and feeding. Close proximity to other ponds.	+	+	+	+
Accessibility/ barriers	Easily accessible margins and few or no barriers to movement.	-	-	+	-
Pond size	Small to medium sized (50-250m^2)	+	+	+	+
Water depth	Some deep and some shallow water. Seasonally dry ponds can be favoured.	+	-	+	-
Water quality	Good water quality preferred.	-	-	-	-
Shade/cover	Mixture of shaded and open areas.	+	-	-	-
Marginal vegetation	Emergent vegetation for cover, shade and food sources. 25% cover is good.	-	-	+	-
Foods	Healthy invertebrate fauna and amphibian spawn on which to feed.	-	-	-	-
Aquatic vegetation	Submerged vegetation on which newts can lay eggs. 60% cover is good.	+	-	-	-
Predators: waterbirds	Absence of water birds (may predate and consume eggs and larvae).	-	-	-	-
Predators: fish	Absence of fish (may predate and consume eggs and larvae).	-	-	-	-

There appeared to be one other pond marked on the local map, within 500m of the proposed site. When this was checked, it was the site of and old sewage works, which was not water tight, and so had no water in it.
All the lakes and ponds within the fishery are netted every year in April, to check the fish and move them from one pond to another. During the last five years, no Great Crested Newts have been found (see Appendix 3)

Conclusion:

Birds: There was bird activity when the survey was carried out. However there were no old nests within the proposed development site, and very little appropriate vegetation to provide good nesting sites for birds.

Amphibians and Reptiles
The possibility of amphibians or reptiles being present on the proposed site was low, due to the lack of appropriate refugia being present.

Badgers
As the distance between the nearest badger sett and the proposed site was greater than 30m, a license would not be required to carry on with the build. Also there was no evidence of badgers foraging within the vicinity of the proposed site.

Water Voles
As the distance between the nearest water and the proposed site was about 70m, there would be no impact on the local water vole population, should the development go ahead. Water voles are usually restricted to the immediate area around a waterbody, often to a maximum of 2m.

Great Crested Newts
Due to the intensive management of all the water bodies to provide recreational fishing, there is a very low risk of any great crested newts breeding on the site. None of the water bodies appeared to have many of the positive features, which would provide good great crested newt breeding ponds, and the actual proposed building site had no appropriate terrestrial habitat.

Legislation

Nesting Birds: Nesting Birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. In addition to this, for some rarer species (listed on Schedule 1 of the Act), it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb them while they are nest building or, at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Recommendations and Mitigation:

- Birds – It is recommended that any works to remove vegetation from the proposed building site, are scheduled outside the bird-nesting season (normally considered to be March-August, although this can be extended with certain species and due to climate change factors). If there is any doubt as to whether birds are nesting, it is advised to get the area checked by a suitably qualified ecologist. Should an active nest be found, the nest must remain undisturbed until the young birds have fledged, which may cause a delay in the proposed works.

References

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. [ed.] (1999) *The Bat Workers' Manual* JNCC

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Betts, C.J. (2001) *Checklist of Protected British Species* Christopher Betts Environmental Biology

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English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines* English Nature

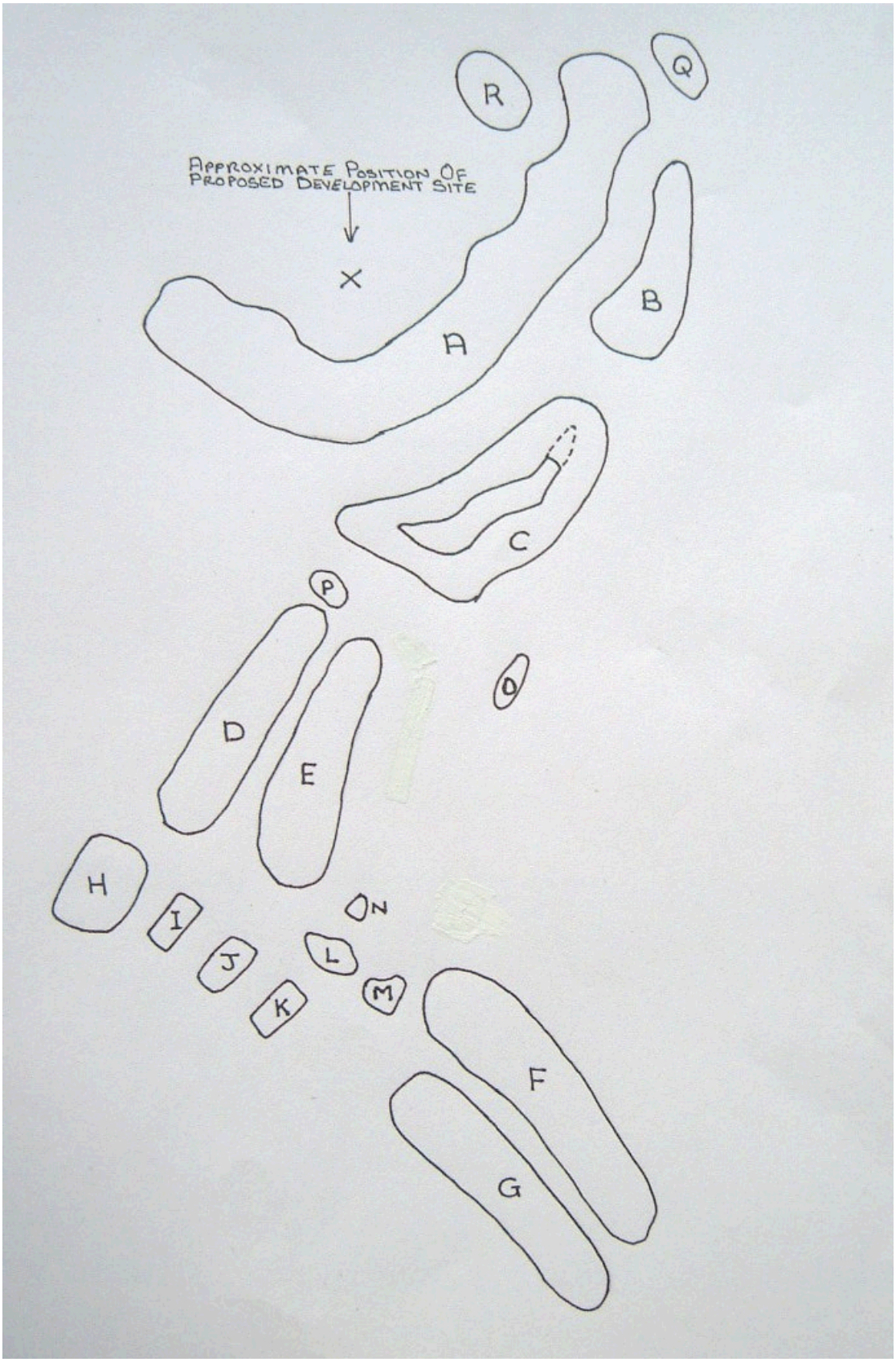
Anon. (2007) *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit* JNCC

Report Produced by A.B.Gibney BSc (Hons), MIEEM
of **Curious Ecologists Ecological Consultancy**

Appendix 1: Photograph of Proposed Building Site



Appendix 2: Plan of 'The Glebe Project' showing Lakes/Ponds and Proposed Building Site



Appendix 3: Statement, re. Netting and stocking Various Lakes/Ponds by Mr R. Marlow

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THE GLEBE – FISH STOCKS

(notes to accompany the attached plan)

The Glebe is a commercial club fishery, which is self-sufficient for its fish stocks.
Fishery management is key to its success, and to sustain the highest standard of fishing the fish stocks are constantly monitored and adjusted.

Routine Lake Management

The water levels in all of the main fishing lakes and adjoining eco areas are lowered and netted on a three-year cycle. Excess fish are removed to enable the fish biomass to be maintained at between 2,000lbs and 3,000lbs per acre. These high levels of stock density are necessary to maintain high-quality fishing.

Rearing Ponds

Stock pond R is netted annually in the first week in April, immediately after the end of the annual fishing season at The Glebe. All 2,000 small carp are removed and moved to other ponds for on-growing. The pond is then restocked with 2,000 3-4-inch carp purchased from a specialist hatchery.

Eco pond Q contains a large stock of koi carp, to 10lbs each, and crucian carp. This pool is netted yearly in the first week in April to remove small, pond-reared fish; the larger individuals are retained as brood stock.

Eco pond N is a filter pond which accepts and helps clean water from Phase 1. It also serves as a breeding pond for tench and also contains a large population of perch. Again, the excess, pond-bred fish are cropped annually in April and transferred elsewhere on site.

Eco pond O is a breeding pond that contains crucian carp and perch. It is part-drained and netted annually.

Rearing ponds L & M are rearing ponds for carp, with a large stock of brood fish, and perch. Again, it is netted annually to remove pond-bred fish.

Rearing Pond O is a rearing and breeding pond for crucian carp, and it also contains perch. Annual netting and fish stock adjustment occurs in the pond.

Pool H and the three adjoining rearing ponds (I,J & K) contain an average of 2-3,000 carp, and they are netted annually.

Comment
I can report that no newts have ever been netted in any of these ponds. It is worth noting that most coarse fish are predatory, notably carp and perch.