

# Review of Information Relating to Great Crested Newts

Turing House School, Hospital Bridge Road, Hounslow

Presented to Bowmer and Kirkland

Issued: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Delta-Simons Project Number: 18-0170.04

Issue No.	Status	Issue Date	Comments	Author	Technical Review	Authorised
1	Final	5 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	-	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
				Jennifer Britt Principal Ecologist	Charlotte Sanderson-Lewis Associate and Ecology Team Leader	Charlotte Sanderson-Lewis Associate and Ecology Team Leader

## 1.0 Context and Purpose

Delta-Simons was instructed by Bowmer and Kirkland ('the Client') to undertake a review of the potential constraints relating to Great Crested Newts (GCNs) and the proposed development of a new school off Hospital Bridge Road in Hounslow (the 'Site'). This follows a response from Natural England and the Local Planning Authority to the planning application, which highlights a record of a GCN within proximity to the Site and requests clarification of how this and the waterbody behind Montrose Avenue, adjacent to the Site, fit into the conclusion reported within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) provided by Campbell Reith Hill LLP in December 2018 not to consider GCNs a constraint to the development proposals.

## 2.0 Legislation

The GCN is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Schedule 5 / 9(4)(b) and (c) of the WCA 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, capture GCN or to deliberately disturb this species, or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to their places of shelter or protection, to damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places, or to intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN whilst in a place of shelter or protection. The legislation applies to all stages of the life cycle including eggs, larvae and juveniles. It should be noted that GCNs spend the majority of their lives on land, venturing up to 500 m (but more usually 250 m) from their breeding ponds and as such any ground works within 500 m of a breeding pond could potentially have an adverse effect on GCNs.

## 3.0 GCN Record

Campbell Reith Hill LLP commissioned a data search from the local records centre, Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL), as part of their PEA on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This did not return any records of GCN within 2 km of the Site. Following a response from Natural England to the planning application for this Site, in which it was reported that a local resident had raised concern in regard to the possible presence of GCNs, it is understood the ecologist advising the LPA requested an updated data search in December 2018. This revealed a record for GCN at OS grid reference TQ141734. This record was dated 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and as such was not available during the original assessment. From information shared by the LPA ecologist, the record

originated through the GiGL webform and it is believed to have been reported as an incidental record by a local resident. The record was accompanied by the following comment:

*“Montrose Avenue is a 1930s suburban street. Behind the house is the railway line where there is a large ditch that runs the length of the road. The ditch/pool has water reeds and the adjacent land is grass and fruit trees. Seen on Montrose Avenue - large ditch / pond behind houses next to railway line. TW2 6HA.”*

#### 4.0 Habitat Assessment

A Delta-Simons ecologist visited the area on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 in order to assess the waterbody understood to be behind Montrose Avenue and surrounding habitats for their suitability to support GCNs and connectivity to the Site for GCN dispersal. Whilst no access was available to the railway embankment which supports the waterbody, the habitats were viewed from the road bridges at either end (Hospital Bridge Road and Percy Road). The railway embankment was heavily vegetated with trees and scrub vegetation such that the waterbody itself was not visible (Photographs 1 and 2). This level of vegetation cover is anticipated to result in the waterbody being heavily shaded and likely susceptible to build up of leaf litter, particularly since management is anticipated to be absent or infrequent. As such, whilst a full assessment of the waterbody was not possible, it is anticipated that the ditch does not provide ideal conditions for GCN presence, and particularly for breeding as the males require clear open water in order to display to the females as part of their courtship.

Should GCNs and other amphibians occur within the ditch, connectivity to suitable terrestrial habitat is limited to the surrounding embankment scrub and adjacent residential gardens. Hospital Bridge Road separates the waterbody from the Site. This relatively busy road features kerbs, which GCN cannot climb, and is bordered on the eastern edge by concrete panel fencing set flush to the ground alongside the end property of Montrose Avenue (Photograph 3). The terraced properties along Montrose Avenue limit dispersal beyond the gardens to the south. GCN dispersal is, therefore, limited to the railway corridor which itself is bisected by the bridge carrying Hospital Bridge Road, creating a break in the vegetation cover of approximately 15 m. Whilst not preventing GCN dispersal entirely, this is considered to discourage movement towards the Site (Photograph 4).

Whilst it is understood the Montrose Avenue ditch is connected to the on-Site drain via an underground pipe, the on-Site drain was reported to be dry during the original PEA, which was undertaken at the time of year when amphibians would be present. As such the on-Site drain is not considered to provide suitable aquatic habitat for this species. Furthermore, it is anticipated that GCNs would not disperse through an underground pipe for a distance of over 100 m.

#### 5.0 Results and Conclusions

Whilst a full assessment of the waterbody behind Montrose Avenue was not possible due to access restrictions, it is considered, from observations from adjacent land, that the waterbody does not provide ideal habitat for GCNs. However, should this species occur, dispersal onto Site is limited. It is considered that the only connectivity to Site for GCNs is along the railway corridor, which is bisected by a bridge carrying Hospital Bridge Road. This results in a gap in vegetation cover which is likely to discourage GCNs. In addition, reptile surveys undertaken in 2018 did not record any incidental sightings of amphibians on-Site, despite artificial refugia being placed along the boundary adjacent to the railway line, and the survey being undertaken at the time of year when adults (and juveniles) are on land.

The risk of GCNs occurring at the Site is considered to be limited and further surveys and mitigation are not deemed necessary at this time.

## Photographs



**Photograph 1 – View east from Hospital Bridge Road**



**Photograph 2 – View west from Percy Road**



**Photograph 3 – Hospital Bridge Road separating the waterbody from the Site**



**Photograph 4 – Railway beneath Hospital Bridge Road**

# Review of Information Relating to Great Crested Newts

Turing House School, Hospital Bridge Road, Hounslow

Presented to Bowmer and Kirkland

Issued: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Delta-Simons Project Number: 18-0170.04

Issue No.	Status	Issue Date	Comments	Author	Technical Review	Authorised
1	Final	5 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	-	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
				Jennifer Britt Principal Ecologist	Charlotte Sanderson-Lewis Associate and Ecology Team Leader	Charlotte Sanderson-Lewis Associate and Ecology Team Leader

## 1.0 Context and Purpose

Delta-Simons was instructed by Bowmer and Kirkland ('the Client') to undertake a review of the potential constraints relating to Great Crested Newts (GCNs) and the proposed development of a new school off Hospital Bridge Road in Hounslow (the 'Site'). This follows a response from Natural England and the Local Planning Authority to the planning application, which highlights a record of a GCN within proximity to the Site and requests clarification of how this and the waterbody behind Montrose Avenue, adjacent to the Site, fit into the conclusion reported within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) provided by Campbell Reith Hill LLP in December 2018 not to consider GCNs a constraint to the development proposals.

## 2.0 Legislation

The GCN is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Schedule 5 / 9(4)(b) and (c) of the WCA 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, capture GCN or to deliberately disturb this species, or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to their places of shelter or protection, to damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places, or to intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN whilst in a place of shelter or protection. The legislation applies to all stages of the life cycle including eggs, larvae and juveniles. It should be noted that GCNs spend the majority of their lives on land, venturing up to 500 m (but more usually 250 m) from their breeding ponds and as such any ground works within 500 m of a breeding pond could potentially have an adverse effect on GCNs.

## 3.0 GCN Record

Campbell Reith Hill LLP commissioned a data search from the local records centre, Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL), as part of their PEA on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This did not return any records of GCN within 2 km of the Site. Following a response from Natural England to the planning application for this Site, in which it was reported that a local resident had raised concern in regard to the possible presence of GCNs, it is understood the ecologist advising the LPA requested an updated data search in December 2018. This revealed a record for GCN at OS grid reference TQ141734. This record was dated 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and as such was not available during the original assessment. From information shared by the LPA ecologist, the record

originated through the GiGL webform and it is believed to have been reported as an incidental record by a local resident. The record was accompanied by the following comment:

*“Montrose Avenue is a 1930s suburban street. Behind the house is the railway line where there is a large ditch that runs the length of the road. The ditch/pool has water reeds and the adjacent land is grass and fruit trees. Seen on Montrose Avenue - large ditch / pond behind houses next to railway line. TW2 6HA.”*

#### 4.0 Habitat Assessment

A Delta-Simons ecologist visited the area on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 in order to assess the waterbody understood to be behind Montrose Avenue and surrounding habitats for their suitability to support GCNs and connectivity to the Site for GCN dispersal. Whilst no access was available to the railway embankment which supports the waterbody, the habitats were viewed from the road bridges at either end (Hospital Bridge Road and Percy Road). The railway embankment was heavily vegetated with trees and scrub vegetation such that the waterbody itself was not visible (Photographs 1 and 2). This level of vegetation cover is anticipated to result in the waterbody being heavily shaded and likely susceptible to build up of leaf litter, particularly since management is anticipated to be absent or infrequent. As such, whilst a full assessment of the waterbody was not possible, it is anticipated that the ditch does not provide ideal conditions for GCN presence, and particularly for breeding as the males require clear open water in order to display to the females as part of their courtship.

Should GCNs and other amphibians occur within the ditch, connectivity to suitable terrestrial habitat is limited to the surrounding embankment scrub and adjacent residential gardens. Hospital Bridge Road separates the waterbody from the Site. This relatively busy road features kerbs, which GCN cannot climb, and is bordered on the eastern edge by concrete panel fencing set flush to the ground alongside the end property of Montrose Avenue (Photograph 3). The terraced properties along Montrose Avenue limit dispersal beyond the gardens to the south. GCN dispersal is, therefore, limited to the railway corridor which itself is bisected by the bridge carrying Hospital Bridge Road, creating a break in the vegetation cover of approximately 15 m. Whilst not preventing GCN dispersal entirely, this is considered to discourage movement towards the Site (Photograph 4).

Whilst it is understood the Montrose Avenue ditch is connected to the on-Site drain via an underground pipe, the on-Site drain was reported to be dry during the original PEA, which was undertaken at the time of year when amphibians would be present. As such the on-Site drain is not considered to provide suitable aquatic habitat for this species. Furthermore, it is anticipated that GCNs would not disperse through an underground pipe for a distance of over 100 m.

#### 5.0 Results and Conclusions

Whilst a full assessment of the waterbody behind Montrose Avenue was not possible due to access restrictions, it is considered, from observations from adjacent land, that the waterbody does not provide ideal habitat for GCNs. However, should this species occur, dispersal onto Site is limited. It is considered that the only connectivity to Site for GCNs is along the railway corridor, which is bisected by a bridge carrying Hospital Bridge Road. This results in a gap in vegetation cover which is likely to discourage GCNs. In addition, reptile surveys undertaken in 2018 did not record any incidental sightings of amphibians on-Site, despite artificial refugia being placed along the boundary adjacent to the railway line, and the survey being undertaken at the time of year when adults (and juveniles) are on land.

The risk of GCNs occurring at the Site is considered to be limited and further surveys and mitigation are not deemed necessary at this time.

## Photographs



**Photograph 1 – View east from Hospital Bridge Road**



**Photograph 2 – View west from Percy Road**



**Photograph 3 – Hospital Bridge Road separating the waterbody from the Site**



**Photograph 4 – Railway beneath Hospital Bridge Road**