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GREAT CRESTED NEWT

SITE ASSESSMENT

ST DEINIOLS ASH FARM

MANCOT

FLINTSHIRE

For The Hawarden Estate

28th May 2019

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Introduction

An ecological survey was carried out in August 2018 for an area of land located next to St Deiniols Ash Farm, Mancot, Flintshire, North Wales. The current proposal for the land would be for residential housing. Since that survey was undertaken a single pond has been highlighted immediately north of the main farmhouse. A site visit was undertaken in May 2019 to assess the pond and also to carry out a HSI assessment in respect of the ponds suitability to support great crested newts.

Site Description

The pond lies directly next to a hedge, just outside the farmyard and north of the farmhouse. It is an area where water collects in a natural dip just before the farmyard, it is fed by a well located slightly further up the field (approximately 50 metres away). Apparently, water runs from the well all year round so the pond always holds at least some water. The pond is used to provide drinking water for sheep and cattle.

The pond is quite small and approximately oval in shape, it measures no more than 8-10 metres long by 4-5 metres wide. It does not support any emergent vegetation (apart from some foals watercress on the back edge) and it is probably 20-30 cm deep at the deepest point, it is slightly poached where animals come to drink.

Using the 1:25:000 Ordnance Survey map there are no other ponds within the area and none for at least 500 metres from the site. The nearest pond shown on the OS map is probably over 1 km south-east of the site across two roads. The pond has connectivity via the adjacent hedgerow, also with other hedgerows to the west and north but these only lead to a housing estate or the main A550 road. The fields in and around the hedgerows are all improved and grazed to a short sward for most of the year.

Great crested newts

The great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended), and is afforded full protection under the terms of Section 9. This makes it an offence if any person:

9(1) “... *intentionally kills, injures or takes* [a great crested newt]”;

9(2) “... *has in his possession or control any live or dead* [great crested newt] *or any part of, or anything derived from such an animal*”;9(4) “... *intentionally or recklessly (a) damages or destroys, or obstructs access to, any structure or place which* [a great crested newt] *uses for shelter or protection; or (b) disturbs any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose*”;

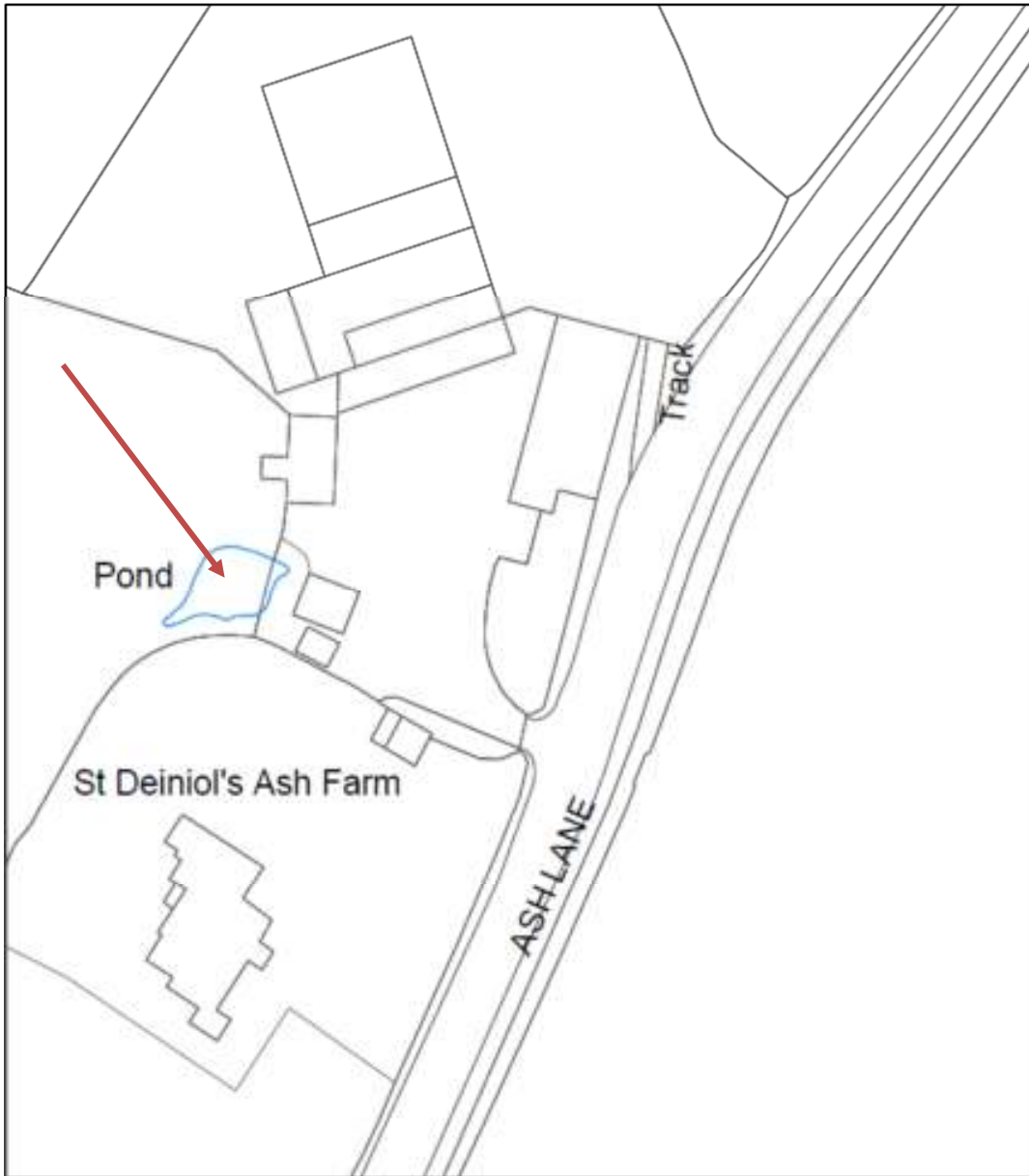
9(5) "... (a) sells, offers or exposes for sale, or has in his possession or transports for the purpose of sale, any live or dead [great crested newt], or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal; or (b) publishes or causes to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that he buys or sells, or intends to buy or sell, any of those things".

Great crested newts are also afforded additional protection through inclusion on Schedule 2 ("European protected species") of **The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)**, which transpose into British law the European Community's **Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)**. The Habitats Directive has recently been superseded by "**The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**".

The Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) is designed to evaluate habitat quality and suitability using a numerical index. The HSI for great crested newts is a measure of habitat suitability and it does not replace newt surveys. In general ponds with higher scores tend to be more like to support GCN than those with a low score. A HSI evaluation was undertaken for this single pond and the score came out as 0.53 where 0.5 to 0.59 is expected to be below average.

Based upon the site visit, visual inspection of the pond, the low HSI score and the lack of other ponds in the area it seems unlikely that this pond will support great crested newts. Discussions with the farmer have not revealed any sightings of newts (a description was provided about size and appearance) although frogs have been regularly seen. Based upon this information it would appear that no further survey works will be required at the present time.

Site plan showing the location of the pond



Site photos

The well which is the water source for the pond



Looking down to the pond from the well



The pond – located just before the farmyard

