

SOUTH WOKINGHAM, BERKSHIRE

**GREAT CRESTED NEWT
2022 SURVEY REPORT**

Final Document

May 2026

Preliminary Ecological Appraisals • Protected Species Surveys and Licensing • NVC • EclA • HRA • Management Plans
Habitats • Badger • Bats • Hazel Dormouse • Birds • Reptiles • Amphibians • Invertebrates • Riparian and Aquatic Species

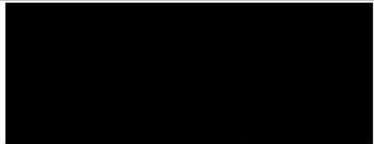
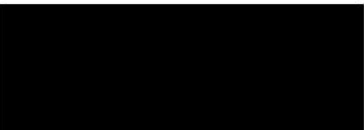
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ECOSA Quality Assurance Record

This report has been produced in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing 2017 (CIEEM, 2017a). The Ecological Impact Assessment and report has been prepared in line with the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018) and survey work has been undertaken in line with references within CIEEM's Source of Survey Guidance (CIEEM, 2017b).

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SOUTH WOKINGHAM, BERKSHIRE

GREAT CRESTED NEWT 2022 SURVEY REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecological Survey and Assessment Ltd (ECOSA) have been appointed by Miller Homes to undertake great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* surveys as part of an Ecological Impact Assessment in 2022 to support a planning application for the redevelopment of South Wokingham, Berkshire.

The findings of the great crested newt survey are:

- Great crested newt were detected by eDNA analysis in Pond 12 and Pond 13. No other ponds sampled returned a positive result for great crested newt.
- Pond 12 and Pond 13 are small ponds within residential homes and thus assessed as likely to support a low population of great crested newt.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Ecological Survey & Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been appointed by Miller Homes to undertake great crested newt surveys as part of an Ecological Impact Assessment to support a planning application for the redevelopment of South Wokingham, Berkshire (hereafter referred to as the site).

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Introduction

This section details the methods employed during the great crested newt surveys. Any significant limitations to the assessment are also considered.

2.1.1 Survey Methods

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

Those ponds and waterbodies located within a 500-metre radius of the site (**Map 1**), where access permitted, were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment (Oldham, et al., 2000). HSI is a numerical index between 0 and 1, derived from an assessment of ten habitat variables known to influence the presence of great crested newt such as geographical location, water body size and permanence, presence of predatory fish and wildfowl, availability of suitable terrestrial habitat and proximity to other ponds. Each factor is scored based on its level of suitability for great crested newt. An HSI of 1 is optimal habitat (high probability of occurrence), while an HSI of 0 is very poor habitat (minimal probability of occurrence). The HSI is calculated on a single-pond basis but takes into account surrounding terrestrial habitat and local pond density. If a pond has a very low HSI score (<0.5) there would typically be a minimal chance of great crested newt presence.

This score can then be used, with caution, to indicate whether further detailed investigations are necessary or whether a particular waterbody can be ‘scoped out’ as unsuitable for great crested newt. However, professional judgement should be used rather than simply relying on the HSI to eliminate ponds from further assessment. Further detailed investigations would involve targeted surveys carried out between mid-March and mid-June to determine presence/absence of great crested newt and if present then an assessment of population status.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey

The great crested newt environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling was undertaken following current best practice guidelines (Biggs, et al., 2014).

Given the presence of a number of waterbodies within 500 metres of the site boundary an eDNA analysis was undertaken to establish the presence / likely absence of great crested newt from within the ponds which were accessible (**Map 1**).

The field sampling entailed the collection of 20 samples of 30 millilitres of water from pre-selected sub-sampling sites around the margin of each waterbody. Sub-sampling sites are chosen to include areas where great crested newt are likely to be present such as areas of vegetation where they may be egg laying and areas of open water where they may be displaying. The 20 samples are then mixed into a single sterile bag from which six samples of water of 15ml are taken, each of which is preserved in 35ml of ethanol. The samples are then refrigerated until analysis at the lab. The samples were analysed in line with current guidance (Biggs, et al., 2014). The samples were taken within the required season (mid-April to June) when great crested newt eDNA is likely to be present within the pond and therefore, the analysis result indicates the presence or likely absence of the species from a given waterbody.

2.1.2 Survey Details

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

The great crested newt HSI assessment was carried out by Joseph Hunt, Kate Carroll, and Megan Woolley of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2025-82923-SCI-CL08 and 2025-81760-SCI-CL08) on 3rd and 4th May 2022.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey

The eDNA sampling was carried out by Joseph Hunt, Kate Carroll, and Megan Woolley of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2025-82923-SCI-CL08 and 2025-81760-SCI-CL08) on 3rd and 4th May 2022.

2.1.3 Survey Limitations

Pond 1, Pond 2, and Pond 8 were not accessible for survey in 2015, 2017 or 2022 so no results are available. Additional other waterbodies within 500 metres of the site were also inaccessible in 2015, 2017 and 2022.

Pond 3b was subject to HSI only in 2015 and assessed as unsuitable so was not surveyed again.

Ponds 3c, 4b, 5a-b, 6a-b, 9, 10a-b, 11b and 14 were all dry and unsuitable, or no longer existed in 2022 so no eDNA was collected.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

This section details the results of the HSI and eDNA surveys carried out on the ponds in the surrounding area.

Great Crested Newt HSI Assessment Results

The HSI survey results determined that only Pond 17 within the surrounding area could be assessed as “Good” for great crested newt. Pond 15 and Pond 13 were assessed as “Average” and “Below Average” respectively, with all remaining ponds assessed as “poor” for supporting great crested newt. **Table 1** contains further details about each pond, including their accessibility to the surveyors.

Table 1: Ponds within 500m of the Site Boundary - Details

Pond No.	National Grid Reference	Location in Relation to Site Boundary	HSI Score	HSI Suitability	Waterbody Notes	Access Possible
3a	SU 8244 6663	Approximately 430 metres south of the site.	0.44	Poor	Duckweed blanket covering the pond.	Only 30% accessible due to steep banks with bramble.
4a	SU 8258 6717	Approximately 74 metres east of the site	0.40	Poor	Grass snake and tadpoles seen. Carp present. Pond surrounded by grassland south and buildings north. 70% duckweed present.	95% accessible. Steep bank at one section.
7	SU 8347 6815	Approximately 175 metres east of the site	0.15	Poor	Poor quality pond with litter, geese and fish. Anecdotal report of Portaloo waste running into pond regularly. Island with nesting Canada goose.	Yes
11a	SU 8258 6733	Approximately 30 metres east of the site	0.35	Poor	Large pond. Algae growth covering 40% top layer of pond.	80% accessible
12	SU 8204 6793	Approximately 35 metres north of the site	0.44	Poor	Lined pond. Duckweed present. Owner stated there is a leak in pond.	Yes
13	SU 8203 6791	Approximately 35 metres north of the site	0.54	Below Average	Lots of smooth newts observed (over 10 males and females). Pond extends to below patio. Garden plants surrounding 60% of pond. 40% patio.	30% inaccessible due to rocky garden planting.
15	SU 8102 6767	Adjacent to the west of the site	0.63	Average	Ditch line containing water to the east of pond. Trees surrounding entire pond. Flag iris and rushes present. Scrub and grassland west, south and east. Litter present in pond.	40% inaccessible. Scrub too thick/banks steep on one side.

Pond No.	National Grid Reference	Location in Relation to Site Boundary	HSI Score	HSI Suitability	Waterbody Notes	Access Possible
16	SU 8185 6742	Approximately 95 metres north of the site	0.21	Poor	Large pond surrounded completely by trees.	Yes
17	SU 8291 6780	Within the site boundary	0.70	Good	Kidney shaped with island in middle; pond connected to a ditch line. Landowner said he has had common newts.	60% accessible. High nettles preventing some access.

Great Crested Newt eDNA Survey Results

The results of the eDNA sampling revealed great crested newt were present in Pond 12 and Pond 13 which lie approximately 35 metres north of the site. No other ponds that were subject to eDNA testing returned positive results for great crested newt.

Table 2: eDNA Results

Pond Number	eDNA Result
3a	Negative
4a	Negative
7	Negative
11a	Negative
12	Positive
13	Positive
15	Negative
16	Negative
17	Negative

4.0 EVALUATION

Great crested newt were found to be present within Pond 12 and Pond 13 via eDNA testing. Both ponds are small and within residential gardens so are assessed as likely to only support a low population of great crested newt.

No other ponds within the surrounding area that were subject to eDNA testing returned a positive result for great crested newt, therefore this species is considered likely absent from those ponds.

5.0 REFERENCES

Biggs, J. et al., 2014. *Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt. Appendix 5. Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of great crested newt (Triturus cristatus) environmental DNA*. Oxford: Freshwater Habitats Trust.

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Oldham, R. S., Keeble, J., Swan, M. J. S. & Jeffcote, M., 2000. Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). *Herpetological Journal*, 10(4), pp. 143-155.

Map 1 Great Crested Newt Survey Results

Client: Miller Homes Strategic Land

Date: April 2026

Status: Final

KEY

- Site Boundary
- Site Buffer (500m)
- GCN Positive Pond Buffer (500m)
- GCN Positive Pond Buffer (250m)
- GCN Positive Pond Buffer (50m)

Great Crested Newt Survey Results

- 1. Not Surveyed in 2015, 2017 or 2022 - No Access
- 2. Not Surveyed in 2015, 2017 or 2022 - No Access
- 3a. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Absent
- 3b. Subject to HSI in 2015 Only - Pond Unsuitable
- 3c. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 4a. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Absent
- 4b*. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 5a*. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 5b. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 6a*. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 6b. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 7. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Absent
- 8*. Not Surveyed in 2015, 2017 or 2022 - No Access
- 9*. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 10a*. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 10b. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 11a. Surveyed in 2015, 2017, and 2022 - GCN Absent
- 12*. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Present
- 13*. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Present
- 14*. Pond Dry and Unsuitable in 2022
- 15. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Absent
- 16. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Absent
- 17*. Surveyed in 2022 - GCN Absent
- Other Waterbodies Not Surveyed - No Access in 2015, 2017 or 2022

* Indicative point markers have been used to show the locations of the smallest ponds surveyed. Points do not represent a pond's true shape or size.

Scale at A3 1:12,000

0 100 200 300 400 m



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