

Date: 11 July 2025
Application: 251413



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

P.O. Box 157

Shute End, Wokingham

Berkshire, RG40 1BN

Tel: (0118) 974 6000

Minicom No: (0118) 974 6991

Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 251413

Applicant: Ex- Army Builders

Site Address: Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane, Swallowfield, Wokingham, RG7 1TB

Parish: Swallowfield

Grid Reference: Easting - 472749, Northing - 164574

Type of Development: Major All other developments

Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 2no. buildings and open log store with associated parking, access and landscaping, plus installation of acoustic screen following demolition of existing buildings and mobile home.

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Development Management has received the above application and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 251413. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#).

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date or **15 working days** if the development type is classed as a major development.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	NatureSpace District Licensing Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology Newts	App No:	251413
Address:	Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane, Swallowfield, Wokingham, RG7 1TB.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of 2no. buildings and open log store with associated parking, access and landscaping, plus installation of acoustic screen following demolition of existing buildings and mobile home.		
Type of Development:	Major All other developments		
Site Visit Made:	No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☒ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

Assessment of available information

The applicant has provided new ecological information in support of their application: GCN Survey, Report Ref.: R2623_GC_N_a, Pond at land east of Part Lane, John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, May 2026. An eDNA analysis was completed on the pond 50m north-east of the site, returning a negative result. This indicates that great crested newts (GCN) are likely absent from this waterbody and therefore, likely absent from the site.

However, as stated within the GCN Survey report, the site does provide 'terrestrial habitats of moderate value to GCN which may provide occasional cover and possible hibernation and feeding opportunities due to the infrequent management of the site.' The residual risk of the development works is considered to be adequately mitigated through the use of the Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) provided within the document.

Therefore, it is recommended that the RAMs provided within GCN Survey are secured via a condition prior to the development being permitted (see suggested condition below).

Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

Reasonable Likelihood of Protected Species

Permission can be refused if adequate information on protected species is not provided by an applicant, as it will be unable to assess the impacts on the species and thus meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), ODPM Circular 06/2005 or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Council has the power to request information under Article 4 of the Town and Country (Planning Applications) Regulations 1988 (SI1988.1812) (S3) which covers general information for full applications. CLG 2007 'The validation of planning applications' states that applications should not be registered if there is a requirement for an assessment of the impacts of a development on biodiversity interests.

Section 99 of ODPM Circular 06/2005 states:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and / or planning obligations before permission is granted."

Great crested newts

Great crested newts and their habitats are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Therefore, it is illegal to deliberately capture, injure, kill, disturb or take great crested newts or to damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb any great crested newts occupying a place of shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to any place of shelter or protection (see the legislation or seek legal advice for full details). Local planning authorities have a statutory duty in exercising of all their functions to 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity,' as stated under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended), as well as a duty under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive. As a result, GCN and their habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys

Validity of ecological reports and surveys can become compromised overtime due to being out-of-date. CIEEM Advice note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and

Surveys (CIEEM, 2019) states: if the age of data is between 12-18 months, "*the report authors should highlight whether they consider it likely to be necessary to update surveys*"; if the age of the data is between 18 months to 3 years, surveys should be updated or written justification of their continued validity will be required; and anything more than 3 years old "*is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated*".

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Suggested condition: All works shall be carried out in strict accordance with the recommendations of the GCN Survey, Report ref.: R2623_GCN_a, Pond at land east of Part Lane, 'RE: Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane, Swallowfield, Berkshire, RG7 1TB', John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, May 2026.

Reasons: To safeguard biodiversity as set out by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, NPPF Chapter 15, Circular 06/2005.

Date:	02/06/2026	Signed:	NatureSpace
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