

Title	Ecology Technical Note
Date	15/01/2026
Revision	A
Client	Mr & Mrs Close
Site	Riseley Farm, Part Lane, Swallowfield
Author	Maddy Carter

1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1** Crossland Ecology was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Close to undertake an ecological walkover survey of land at Riseley Farm, Part Lane, Swallowfield (the Site). The Site is located at central Grid Reference SU 73241 63832 and the Site boundary is shown in Figure 1.
- 1.2** The purpose of this Ecology Technical Note is to provide an appraisal of the habitats and ecological features present and to review if there is any risk specifically to great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, to support the planning application for the Site (Wokingham Borough Council planning reference: 253008).
- 1.3** The proposed development includes repairs and renovations of the existing Grade II listed farmhouse, including internal alterations and external landscaping. No roof works. The external landscaping will include the extension of the garden patio from 0.7 m to 6 m from the rear wall of the farmhouse.
- 1.4** The Site was visited on 18/12/2025 by Crossland Ecology with accessible areas of the Site walked over. The Site walkover comprised a UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Survey. UKHab survey methods are set out in the UK Habitat Classification User Manual - Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd. 2023). UKHab is a comprehensive habitat classification system designed for the UK and is intended for ecologists to identify and map habitats to provide outputs that are suitable for ecological impact assessment. Habitat mapping was undertaken using the standard classification to indicate habitat types, and the readily identifiable higher plant species identified and recorded.

2.0 **Ecological Appraisal**

- 2.1** The Site (Figure 1) is comprised of a residential dwelling, a small garden patio and an area of garden which is dominated by a frequently maintained grass lawn. The grass lawn is dominated by perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* with abundant Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and white clover *Trifolium repens*. Common daisy *Bellis perennis*, common dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* are frequent, whilst spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare* and hedgerow crane's-bill *Geranium pyrenaicum* are occasional. The entire garden, extending beyond the site boundary, has a short sward length of between 5 – 10 cm. Wooden fencing lines the northern and eastern boundaries, whilst a yew *Taxus baccata* hedgerow with a concrete wall behind this, lines the southern boundary. Additionally, there are multiple flower beds within the gardens comprising ornamental species and a single scattered *Prunus* sp., tree with a Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) of <30 cm.
- 2.2** The Site lies within 10 m of a pond located beyond the yew hedgerow and concrete wall to the south. The pond measures approximately 0.017 ha and is fed by drainage ditches that extend across the farm. A grass field lies adjacent to the south of this pond and appears to be infrequently managed due to the varied length present. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) was completed to assess the suitability for GCN and provided a score of 'Below Average' (Table 1).

Table 1: HSI scores for the on-Site pond.

HSI Criteria	Pond Scores	HSI Values
Location	Zone A	1
Pond Area	175m ²	0.35
Pond Drying	Dries Annually	0.1
Water Quality	Moderate	0.67
Shade	0-60%	1
Waterfowl	Absent	1
Fish	Absent	1
Pond Count	2	0.6
Terrestrial Habitat	Moderate	0.67
Macrophytes	1-5%	0.35
Score	Below Average	0.5647

- 2.3** Although the HSI is not conclusive on GCN present, it indicates that there is a reasonably low likelihood of this species using this pond. Additionally, the habitats on-Site provide very limited suitable habitat due to the lack of varied species diversity and sward length. The garden habitat may offer some suitability for common amphibians such as the common toad *Bufo bufo*, but this is likely to be sporadic use. The grassland to the south of the pond provides more suitable habitat as it undergoes less intense management and use by the farm residents.

2.4 The pond and the grass field to the south may also provide suitable habitat for common reptiles such as slow worms *Anguis fragilis* and the West European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*. Due to the proximity of the proposed development to these habitats, there is a low likelihood transient individuals could be present on-Site.

2.5 The common toad, slow worms and West European hedgehog are listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as Species of Principal Importance (SPI). No further survey or assessment is considered necessary, however, the adoption of standard precautionary measures during Site clearance and construction is advised, as follows:

- Areas comprising dense/long vegetation will be carefully trimmed or cut down to no less than 150 mm above ground level during the first phase of clearance. The direction of clearance should move towards more suitable habitats off-Site.
- The vegetation can then be further trimmed to ground level after a period of 24 hours has elapsed, allowing time for any remaining amphibians and/or reptiles to disperse from the area. Alternatively, the area can be searched in between cuts.
- In the very unlikely event a GCN is encountered it should be left to disperse on its own accord and the project ecologist contacted to determine any further mitigation/licencing requirements.
- Any trenches should be covered overnight, or left with a plank of wood leant against the side to allow hedgehogs (and other small mammals) to escape should they accidentally fall in.

2.6 The scattered tree has no potential roosting features (PRFs) present due to the young age and lack of ecological niches. It was noted, however, that the farmhouse on-Site has multiple lifted roof tiles on all elevations. If the proposed development does require any roof works to take place, further Bat Emergence Surveys will need to be undertaken to determine the absence or presence of bats.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 The Site walkover survey determined that the Site comprises low value vegetated garden and hardstanding habitats. A pond, assessed to have 'Below Average' suitability for GCN, is located 10 m south of the site but separated by fencing and a concrete wall.

3.2 The Site has been deemed to have a very low likelihood of GCN presence, however, common amphibians, reptiles and West European hedgehogs could sporadically use the site.

- 3.3** Recommendations include standard precautionary measures during site clearance and construction to ensure no death/injury occurs to any SPIs.
- 3.4** PRFs were noted on the Grade II listed farmhouse in the form of lifted roof tiles. Currently, no roof works are proposed but should this change, further Bat Emergence Surveys will be required to determine absence or presence of bats.

Figure 1: The Site



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Figure 2: Photos of the Site



Photo 1: The vegetated garden in the east of the Site.



Photo 2: The yew hedgerow that lies outside the Site boundary.



Photo 3: The pond to the south of the site, lined with a concrete wall.



Photo 4: The grassland to the south of the pond.



Photo 5: The single tree within the vegetated garden.