

Date: 3 June 2026
Application: 261216



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 261216

Applicant: Mr Stuart Williams

Site Address: Elmlands, Little Hill Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0TG

Parish: St. Nicholas, Hurst

Grid Reference: Easting - 479068, Northing - 171564

Type of Development: Other Change of Use

Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of part of the existing paddock to residential curtilage, erection of a detached leisure outbuilding, plus installation of ground-mounted PV panels.

Case Officer: Cameron Young

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 261216. 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 requested from the case officer.

Your observations are required in respect of this application by **24 June 2026**.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Berkshire District Licensing Officer
Service	WBC Ecology Newts
App No:	261216
Address:	Elmlands, Little Hill Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0TG.
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed change of use of part of the existing paddock to residential curtilage, erection of a detached leisure outbuilding, plus installation of ground-mounted PV panels.
Type of Development:	Other Change of Use
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

Recommendations

If the development is permitted, one of the following options is required to be undertaken prior to determination of the application:

- Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) strategy documents completed by a suitably qualified ecologist that are acceptable for the development.

Reason: 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.

Alternatively, if the applicant would like to pursue a risk-free approach, a district licence may be acquired.

- The District Licence scheme (administered by the NatureSpace Partnership) should be applied for. Under the Wokingham Borough Council district licence, development works that may cause impacts upon great crested newts can be authorised as part of the planning process.

N.B. The applicant is required to submit a NatureSpace Report or Certificate prior to determination if this option is pursued.

Summary

- The development falls within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts. Impact risk zones have been derived through advanced modelling to create a species distribution map which predicts likely presence. In the red impact zone, there is highly suitable habitat for great crested newts, and they are likely to be present.
- There are 7 ponds within 500m of the development site. The closest of these is 100m southwest of the site boundary. Please note that not all ponds are displayed in the image below.
- There is habitat capable of supporting GCN foraging and movement around the site peripheries and immediately off-site.
- There are no significant barriers to movement that would prevent GCN records in the wider landscape from accessing the site or nearby habitat.



Figure above: Outline of the site (red) in the context of the surrounding landscape, including the Impact Risk Zones for GCN. Ponds are shown in light blue. A 250m buffer is shown around the site in green and a 500m buffer in blue. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

Ecological Information

The applicant has provided ecological information: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Proposed outbuilding and ground mounted solar panels at Elmlands, Little Hill Road, Hurst, RG10 0TG, EDM Planning, 8th May 2026. The report states:

- 'Potential terrestrial habitat for great crested newt within the Site is limited to localise scrub margins hedgerow bases and occasional accumulations of vegetation or disturbed material. These features are limited in extent and fragmented by hard standing and active site use.'
- 'Given the absence of aquatic habitat within the site and the separation of the nearest mapped pond by Little Hill Road and intervening developed/managed land nearby ponds are not considered to be functionally connected to the Application Site. The site is therefore considered unlikely to support great crested Newt and is not considered to provide important breeding, resting or functionally linked restroom habitat for this species.'

It is recommended that precautionary vegetation clearance and RAMs are used to mitigate for any residual impacts.

Conclusion and recommendations

Habitat suitable for Great Crested Newt (GCN) foraging and dispersal, including hedgerows, is present within the site. Additional areas of scrub, hedgerow, and woodland occur immediately adjacent to the northern, western, and southern site boundaries, providing further connectivity to the surrounding landscape.

Six ponds are located within 500 m of the proposed development site, with no significant barriers likely to impede GCN dispersal between these waterbodies and the site. Furthermore, a well-documented population of GCN has been recorded approximately 600 m west of the site, indicating the potential for the species to utilise habitats within and surrounding the development area.

While the location of the development itself falls on an area of managed grassland, the risk of GCN traversing this habitat between areas of higher quality habitat on and off site cannot be ruled out. There is also a chance that the suitability of the grassland increases as a result demolition or construction activities. Newts may take shelter in rubble piles or beneath stored materials, and there is also a risk of individuals becoming trapped in open excavations. This could result in individual GCN being harmed as a consequence of development.

We agree that the risk is considered to be manageable via a precautionary method of working. However, the RAMs submitted within the PEA does not adequately detail the measures required to limit risks. The new RAMs document should include the following:

- Details on sensitive vegetation clearance
- Maintenance of the site during construction
- Housekeeping of the site and working practices
- A statement that all works that may cause an offence must cease and guidance be sought if required

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Please use this section to detail any conditions that are required to make this development acceptable in planning terms. All conditions should be accompanied by reasons.			
Date:	23/06/2026	Signed:	NatureSpace