

Date: 20 August 2025
Application: 251976



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

P.O. Box 157

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Berkshire, RG40 1BN

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Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Householder Consultation

Application Number: 251976

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Laird

Site Address: Satis, Green Drive, Wokingham, Wokingham, RG40 2HT

Parish: Wokingham Town

Grid Reference: Easting - 481988, Northing - 167901

Type of Development: Other Householder

Proposal: Householder application for the proposed erection of a detached garage with first floor storage area.

Case Officer: Julia Gibowicz

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 251976. 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:	251976
Address:	Satis, Green Drive, Wokingham, Wokingham, RG40 2HT.		
Proposal:	Householder application for the proposed erection of a detached garage with first floor storage area.		
Type of Development:	Other Householder		
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

Summary

Two options are available to enable a positive determination:

- Precautionary working methods secured via compliance condition – the applicant should confirm they are aware of the restrictions this would impose, including the need to cease works and gain professional advice if great crested newts are encountered. Great crested newts are understood to be present at neighbouring properties and considered likely to be present within the application site.

OR

- Provide further information prior to determination – a NatureSpace certificate as evidence of joining Wokingham Borough Council's District Licence Scheme. This option would allow works to continue without delay if great crested newts are encountered.

Detailed Comments

The application site falls within an amber impact risk zone for great crested newts, indicating an area of suitable habitat and potential presence of the species. There are no ponds within the application site and only one mapped pond within 500m, approximately 420m south of the site. However, there are several records of great crested newts located in adjacent and nearby properties. These records range in dates between 2004 and 2023, showing long-term presence, and are understood to correspond to a population persisting in small garden ponds. These garden ponds

are visible on satellite images. There is also a record of great crested newt located within the application site itself, however the record uses a six-figure grid reference which is only accurate to the nearest 100m, so could potentially correspond to one of the neighbouring properties.

The applicant has supplied an Ecological Appraisal (Ostara Ecological Services, dated 21 June 2023) which is understood to have been prepared for a previously proposed development at the site, rather than the current application. The Ecological Appraisal does not identify all of the great crested newt records described above, nor does it identify the garden ponds within neighbouring properties, nonetheless it does provide a precautionary method of works to avoid impacts to great crested newt.

The survey for the Ecological Appraisal was carried out over two years ago, at which time the habitats which will be impacted by the proposed development were sub-optimal for great crested newts. I have requested and been provided up-to-date site photographs from the Case Officer, and these confirm the habitats remain sub-optimal.

Great crested newts are known to be present immediately adjacent to the application site, it is very likely they traverse the application site and may also shelter within it. However, given the small scale of the proposed works and low suitability of impacted habitats, licensing is not considered necessary and the precautionary method of works within the Ecological Appraisal is considered appropriate. I am satisfied that if the development works are in accordance with the precautionary method statement, the proposed development will not negatively impact great crested newts. I therefore recommend a compliance condition.

I also recommend confirmation is gained from the applicant that they are aware that great crested newts are known to be present, and that they understand the requirements of the precautionary method of works, including the need to halt all works if great crested newts are encountered and seek professional advice. Alternatively, the applicant does have the option of utilising Wokingham Borough Council's great crested newt district licence, which would not require the above precautionary measures to be conditioned, and works would not have to stop if great crested newts are encountered. To use the district licence, the applicant would need to enquire with NatureSpace and join the scheme prior to determination of the current planning application. Further information is available at www.naturespaceuk.com

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Condition

Great crested newt avoidance measures

The development hereby approved shall be implemented strictly in accordance with the GCN Precautionary Method of Works detailed within the supporting document: Ecological Appraisal (Ostara Ecological Services, dated 21 June 2023).

Reason: To minimise the impacts of development on biodiversity, in accordance with Policy CP7 of Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy, Section 15 of the NPPF, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The District Licence

If the applicant chooses to use the District Licence, the above condition will not be required and a different condition will be necessary to secure use of the licence. Wording for this will be provided if the applicant joins the scheme.

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 an updated survey and report will be required and anything more than 3 years old *“The report is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated”*.

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Date:	11/09/2025	Signed:	NatureSpace
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