

Date: 20 November 2025
Application: 252782



**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: 252782

Applicant: The Owner and/or Occupier

Site Address: Former Prince Bros / Grove Service Station, Old Bath Road, Charvil, Twyford, RG10 9QJ

Parish: Charvil

Grid Reference: Easting - 478172, Northing - 176037

Type of Development: Minor General industrial/storage/warehouse (1-999 sqm)

Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from service station to a fuel oil storage and distribution facility including demolition of 2 no. existing buildings and a garage and the recladding of the existing building, installation of 8 no. fuel oil storage tanks and construction of retaining structures, plus refurbishment of hardstanding, car parking and other associated works.

Case Officer: Marcus Watts

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 252782. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/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 **11 December 2025**.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	District Licensing Officer NatureSpace		
Service	WBC Ecology Newts	App No:	252782
Address:	Former Prince Bros / Grove Service Station, Old Bath Road, Charvil, Twyford, RG10 9QJ.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed change of use from service station to a fuel oil storage and distribution facility including demolition of 2 no. existing buildings and a garage and the recladding of the existing building, installation of 8 no. fuel oil storage tanks and construction of retaining structures, plus refurbishment of hardstanding, car parking and other associated works.		
Type of Development:	Minor General industrial/storage/warehouse (1-999 sqm)		
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:

- 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 and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence.
- There are 5 ponds within 500m of the development proposal, the closest being c.60m away and being designated as a priority pond for clean water and wildlife.
- It should be noted that ongoing operations on the site have the potential to negatively impact the neighbouring priority waterbodies,

- There is direct connectivity between the waterbodies and terrestrial habitat in the landscape and the development site, which could aid great crested newt dispersal into the development site.
- Although the site itself contains limited suitable habitat this does not stop individuals dispersing onto the site from nearby waterbodies and utilising features on the site. Appendix 3 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (Rachel Hacking Ecology, 2025) shows suitable habitat features on and bordering the site including rubble piles, brash and wet woodland. Whilst not natural features rubble piles could be utilised as refugia for GCN.
- There are recent great crested newt records to the north of the site.
- Natural England Standing Advice guidance for planning authorities advises that surveys on ponds up to 500m from development sites should be requested. The two waterbodies with direct connectivity to the site have not been surveyed.

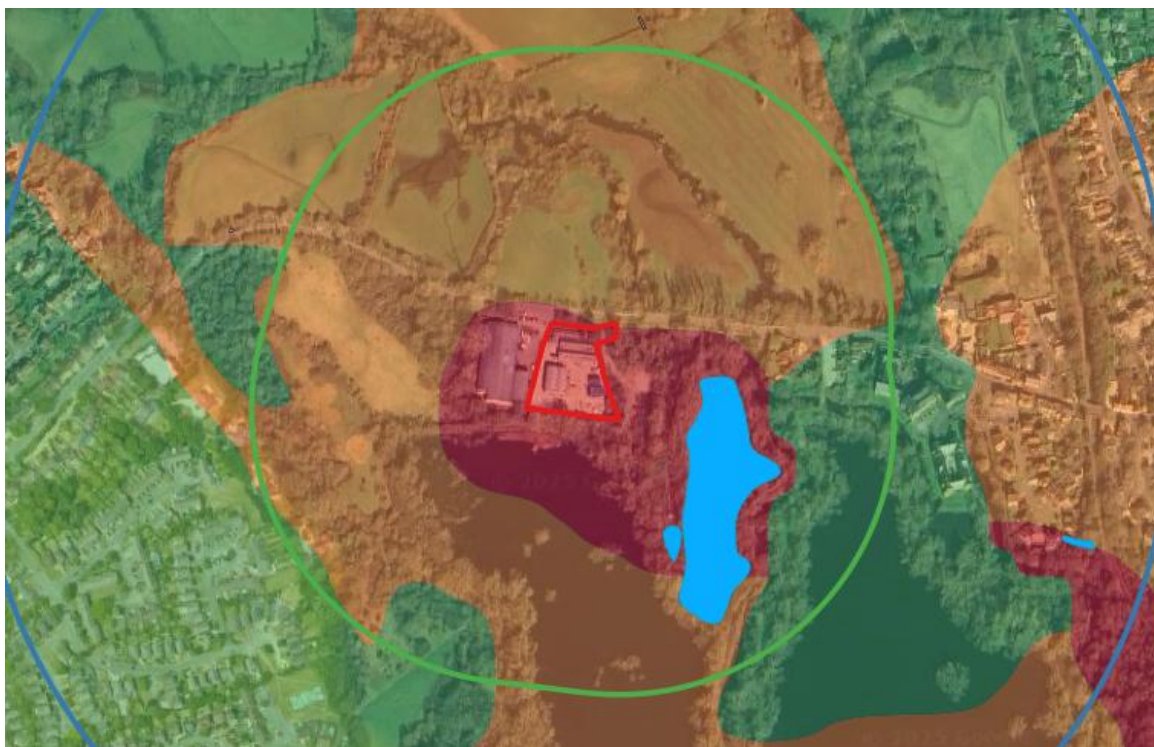


Figure 1: Outline of the site (red) in the context of the surrounding landscape, including the Impact Risk Zones for GCN. Ponds are shown in light blue. A 250m buffer is shown around the site in green and a 500m buffer in blue. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

Ecological Information

The applicant has provided an Ecological Impact Assessment (Rachel Hacking Ecology, 2025).

Within this report it states that:

- “The site and immediate surroundings offer suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians and reptiles”
- “wet woodland may provide sub-optimal habitat which could potentially be used opportunistically when sufficient water levels are available”
- “The vegetation cover provided by the woodland, scrub, deadwood and brash surrounding the site may provide suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN.”
- “GCN are considered of importance at site level should they be present on site.”
- “GCN, could potentially be present within the boundary habitats of the site and accidentally or opportunistically use potential terrestrial habitats (TN2 & TN3) on site”
- “This is considered a negative impact at the site level”
- A Reasonable Avoidance Method Statement (RAMS) is proposed within the EclA but given the lack of survey effort of nearby ponds and existing features on and near the site there is a reasonable likelihood that GCN would be encountered on site and as such constitute an offence.
- Further information is required to establish the likely presence of GCN in the waterbodies connected to the site.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

We are not satisfied that the applicant has adequately demonstrated that there will be no impact to great crested newts as a result of the development being approved. Protected species are a material consideration of the planning process and 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 (ODPM, 2005/06).

The applicant has not surveyed the 2 ponds within 500m of the site with direct connectivity, so the status of these ponds is currently unknown. One of these ponds is located c.60m of the site. Should great crested newts be present in these nearby ponds, they may well use the site during their terrestrial dispersal phase. Therefore, it is recommended that further evidence is provided to confirm the status of the ponds and if there is a likely impact to great crested newts. RAMs would only be deemed acceptable if GCN are confirmed to be absent from the nearby ponds.

One of following options is required to be undertaken **prior to determination** of the application:

1. Either the presence or likely absence of GCN to be established by way of a survey (and potential population assessments) undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and in accordance with the Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook (Froglife, 2001) and the Great Crested Newt

Environmental eDNA Technical Advice Note (Natural England 2014). Where GCN are identified on or around the development site an EPS site-based mitigation licence may be required. If survey data is already submitted the applicant should provide written confirmation that a 'traditional' EPSL in respect of GCN will be pursued.

*N.B. All survey reports must be submitted **prior to determination** if not already available.*

2. The District Licence scheme (administered by the NatureSpace Partnership) should be applied for. Under Wokingham Bourough's district licence, development works that may cause impacts upon GCN 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.*

Date:	10/12/2025	Signed:	NatureSpace
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