

By email only

To: Lauren Williams
4 Great Lea,
Pingewood,
Three Mile Cross,
RG7 1NU
Email: laurenwilliams_660@hotmail.com
Tel: 07716532930

Tel: 01189 759387
Email: giles@gsecology.co.uk

21 January 2026
Our reference: ECO4004

Dear Lauren,

Re: Great Crested Newt Statement – 4 Great Lea, Pingewood, Three Mile Cross, RG7 1NU

1.1 I am writing following our great crested newt (GCN) assessment at the site with details of the findings from the visit and way forwards recommendations.

2.0 Background and details of proposed works

2.1 A householder planning application has been submitted to Wokingham Borough Council for the erection of a new garage at the above site.

2.2 The planning application reference is 252432.

2.3 The application was deemed to be invalid by Wokingham Council on 15 October 2025 for two reasons, one of which concerned ecology. The letter from the council reads:

“1. The site is located with a red or amber risk zone modelled for the protected species 'Great Crested Newt' as identified on the Wokingham Planning Constraints map. It is important that the local planning authority considers the potential risk to the this species as a result of the proposal. Please supply a site specific 'Great Crested Newt Statement' to consider this risk and whether mitigation measures or a protected species licence would be required. It may help to seek specialist advice through an Ecological Consultant.”

2.4 You asked me to carry out a GCN site visit and produce a site specific “Great Crested Newt Statement”.

2.5 I am a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental management and a Chartered Environmentalist. I have more than 20 professional years' experience as professional ecologist and hold a CL08 Level 1 Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence (reference: 2015-16712-CLS-CLS).

3.0 GCN legislation and ecology

3.1 GCN receive special protection under UK law and it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations) to deliberately or recklessly destroy or damage their habitat, or to disturb, kill or harm them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

3.2 GCN spend most of their lives on land, within up to 500m of a breeding pond. The most important terrestrial habitat is within 100m, where most of the population are likely to be located foraging, resting, sheltering and hibernating relatively close to their breeding site. However, a proportion of the

population is also likely to forage for food and shelter in suitable habitats up to 250m from a breeding pond and juvenile animals have been known to disperse up to 500m from it in a single season.

- 3.3 GCN are likely to be disturbed by any work that involves altering their breeding pond (e.g. by introducing fish or deepening or altering its size) or works that involve clearing land up to 500m around ponds, where such land has been managed and maintained in such a way that it is likely to support GCN. In such cases a licence for derogation from the provisions of the habitat regulations may need to be obtained.
- 3.4 In addition, GCN are a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (these are the “priority species” as per the NPPF).

4.0 Methodology

- 4.1 A desk study data search was undertaken for ecological data within the zone of influence of the survey area (considered to be a maximum of 500m in this case). This involved:
 - (1) Accessing species records on Natural England’s MAGIC website [<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>]
 - (2) Studying aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey maps for nearby ponds
 - (3) Reviewing the NatureSpace district licence impact risk map
- 4.2 A walkover survey of the site was undertaken on 16 January 2026. Weather conditions were 9 degrees C, 5/8 cloud, no wind and no rain (although there had been recent heavy rain). During the survey the site was assessed in terms of its suitability for GCN.
- 4.3 In addition, where accessible from public rights of way nearby ponds, shown on Ordnance Survey maps, were visited to determine if they still existed.

5.0 Findings

Desk study

- 5.1 There are no records of GCN licences being issued within 500m of the site.
- 5.2 The NatureSpace “Impact Risk Map” shows the site as being located predominantly within the “Red zone”, defined as “highly suitable habitat – the most important areas for GCN” and only a small area in the southeastern corner within the “Amber Zone (defined as “suitable habitat – great crested newt likely to be present”).
- 5.3 There are six ponds shown on ordnance survey maps within 500m of the application site (see Appendix 2).

Habitats within and surrounding the application site

- 5.4 The site is located towards the northern end of Great Lea, a part residential, part rural road northwest of Three Mile Cross (Grid Reference SU 7113 6848).
- 5.5 It comprises a semi-detached dwelling and its curtilage.
- 5.6 The front garden comprises a small area of short-cut amenity grassland and the gravel driveway.
- 5.7 The rear garden comprises a small area of short-cut amenity grassland, with the remainder being completely covered in black polythene, tarpaulin sheets and weed control membrane (held in place by bricks and concrete blocks). It is bound by close board fencing to the north and south, and wire and rail fencing to the east.
- 5.8 The application site abuts other similar-sized residential properties and their associated gardens to the north and south, and a recently ploughed arable field to the east. To the west on the opposite side of

Great Lea is a detached house and its garden with a large grassland field to the north of the house (within which a pond is shown on OS maps).

Nearby ponds

- 5.9 There are six ponds shown on ordnance survey maps within 500m of the application site (see Appendix 2).
- 5.10 The closest pond (Pond 1 in appendix 2) is located approximately 40m west of the site. However, during the site visit it was not visible from the road and it may be that it no longer exists.
- 5.11 The second closest pond (Pond 2 in appendix 2) is in a block of wet woodland to the north west, south of Hartley Court Road, approximately 150m from the site. It was not accessible other than from the road but held water at the time of the survey.
- 5.12 The other ponds were not accessible.
- 5.13 There are also numerous ditches which hold water for at least some of the year, including a ditch running along Great Lea, which may be used by GCN.

6.0 Assessment and way forward recommendations

- 6.1 The NatureSpace “Impact Risk Map” shows the site as being located predominantly within the “Red zone”, defined as “highly suitable habitat – the most important areas for GCN” and only a small area in the southeastern corner within the “Amber Zone (defined as “suitable habitat – great crested newt likely to be present”).
- 6.2 The plastic sheet and tarpaulin covering the rear garden is very likely to be used by GCN if they are present in the area as it provides a damp, dark area where they can shelter and GCN (GCN are often found under sheets such as these).
- 6.3 Removal of the cover could result in the killing or injury of any GCN present and may leave them vulnerable to predation from corvids and other birds.
- 6.4 If GCN were to be present these works would be illegal unless a licence for derogation from the Habitat Regulations was in place (see section 3.1 above).
- 6.5 It is therefore recommended that the site is registered under NatureSpace District Licence scheme – see below. Monies from this scheme are used to provide new habitats for GCN within the wider landscape thereby ensuring that there is no adverse impact upon this important species of amphibian.
- 6.6 Once a licence is in place a method statement would need to be followed whereby the sheet is carefully removed under the supervision of an ecologist with any GCN (and other amphibians) moved to a safe area at the peripheries of the site.

7.0 District Level Licensing

- 7.1 The NatureSpace Partnership has designed a GCN District Licence (DL) scheme with participating local planning authorities and the freshwater and amphibian NGOs in the UK. The scheme gives applicants the opportunity to access an alternative GCN licensing option whereby they do not need to provide newt survey information with their planning application (often causing substantial delays). Instead NatureSpace provide an impact report and certificate that are submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) with the planning application.
- 7.2 The steps required to obtain a district level licence are as follows:
 - Apply to NatureSpace for a DL impact report and certificate. The impact report will detail how the development will be dealt with under the DL.

- Submit the impact report and certificate to the LPA. They can then grant planning permission for the works subject to conditions requiring the licence to be adhered to. When planning permission is granted the licence is, in effect, granted.
- NatureSpace provide compensatory habitat (including four ponds for every pond lost) within the wider landscape, manage and monitor these habitats and monitor the GCN population more widely.
- For householder development, a fixed fee of £500 is charged by NatureSpace to register a planning application under the DL.

7.3 The certificate is specific to a single planning application. As such it is best to only pay for the certificate once the planning authority have indicated that planning permission is likely to be granted.

7.4 We can complete the NatureSpace forms for you once the planning authority have indicated that planning permission is likely to be granted.

8.0 Summary

8.1 In summary:

- (1) There are six ponds within 500m of the application site and numerous ditches.
- (2) The site is predominantly located within the Naturespace GCN “Red zone”, defined as “highly suitable habitat – the most important areas for GCN”
- (3) GCN are therefore likely to use the site.
- (4) The area where the garage to be built is covered in tarpaulin and polyethene sheets. This provides a damp and dark area where GCN may shelter.
- (5) Removal of the cover could result in the killing or injury of GCN present and may leave them vulnerable to predation from corvids and other birds.
- (6) This would be illegal unless a licence for derogation from the habitat regulations was in place.
- (7) The easiest way to licence the site would be to register the site under the NatureSpace Partnership GCN District Licence scheme.
- (8) This would cost £500 and, as the certificate is specific to a single planning application, it is best to apply and pay for the certificate only once the planning authority have indicated that planning permission is likely to be granted.
- (9) After planning permission has been granted a method statement would then need to be followed whereby the sheet is carefully removed under the supervision of an ecologist with any GCN (and other amphibians) moved to a safe area at the peripheries of the site.

8.2 We will complete the licence forms for you once the planning authority have indicated that planning permission is likely to be granted. You should however inform the planning authority that you intend to register the application under the Naturespace District Licence (by sending this letter to them).

8.3 I trust that the above is clear but please do not hesitate to call or email if you have any questions.

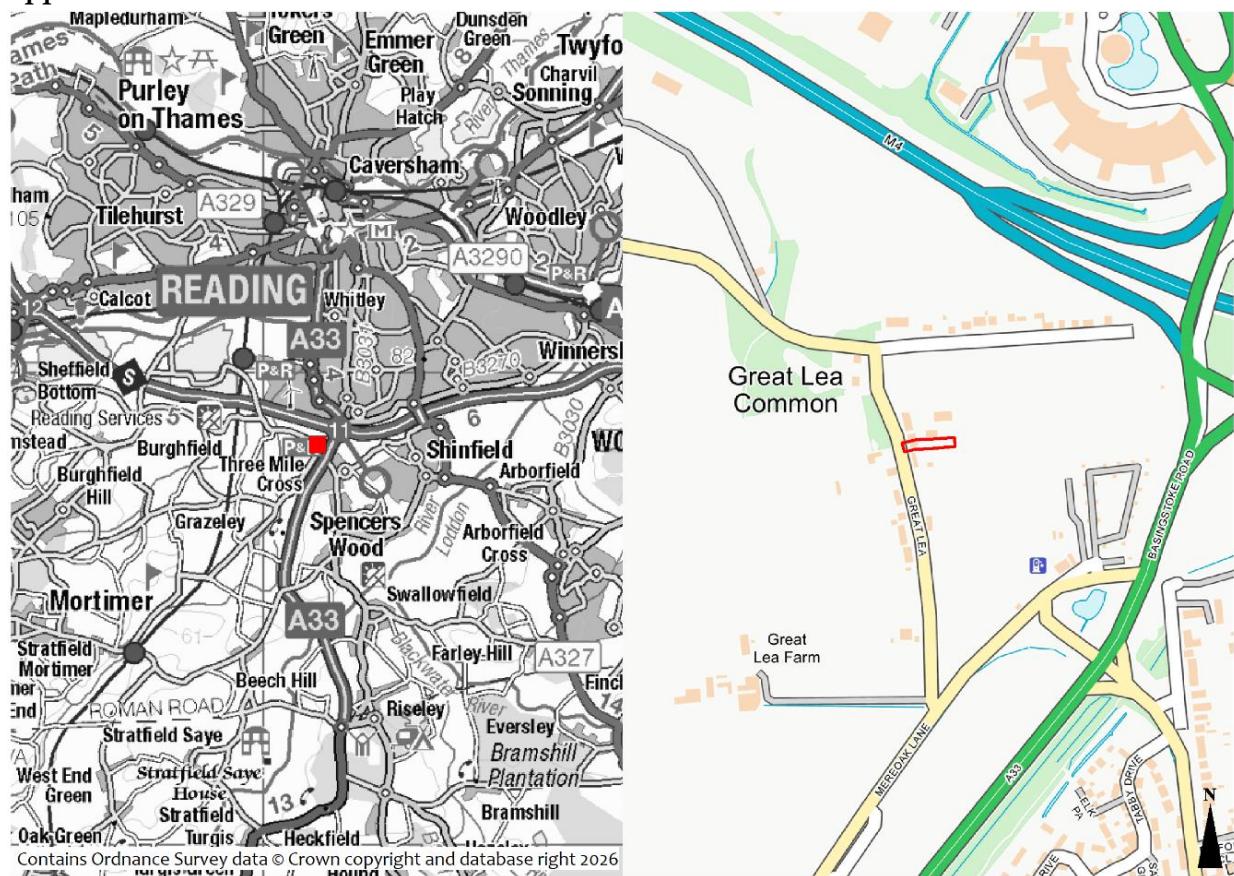
Yours sincerely,



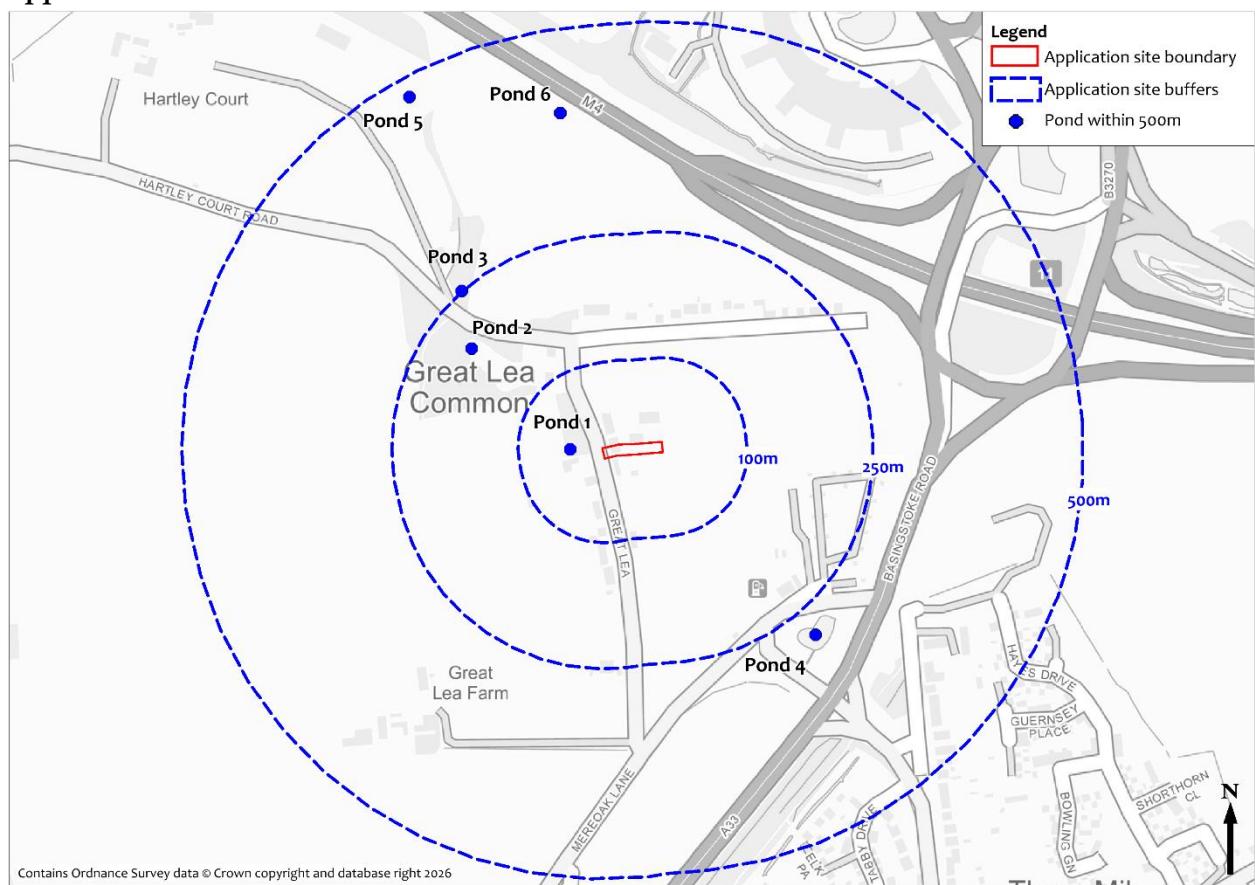
Giles Sutton MSc MCIEEM CEnv

Director
GS Ecology LTD

Appendix 1 – Site location



Appendix 2 – Ponds within 500m



Appendix 3 – Photos

Photos 1 and 2 – The location of the proposed garage



Photo 3 – Pond 2 (for location see appendix 2)



Photo 4 – Ditch running adjacent to Great Lea (opposite number 4)

