
**Broadacre Place
Hurst**

Report for:
Miss L Spiers
Broadacre Place
Broadcommon Road
Hurst
Reading
Berkshire
RG10 0RE

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by Miss Spiers to carry out an ecological survey of the above site. The purpose of the survey was to determine the presence or likely absence of great crested newts on the site and provide appropriate and proportionate mitigation. Although the works are minimal, this survey was considered necessary as the site lies within an amber risk zone for great crested newts. A series of photographs has been attached at Appendix A.

The proposals are to construct a front porch and entrance into the existing building and remove the 'log cabin' mobile home.

LEGISLATION

All amphibian species have some level of protection under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection', is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

METHODOLOGY

Baseline Data

As certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and whether any European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for great crested newts have been granted within 1 km of the site. In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Walk-over Site Survey

An ecological walk-over survey of the site was completed on Tuesday 10 March 2026 by an experienced and licenced ecologist¹. An assessment of the site was carried out to determine its suitability for great crested newts by recording the habitats present. In addition, any natural/artificial refugia present on the site was lifted to check for any sheltering animals.

¹ Lead surveyor was Alan Beaumont MSc. BSc. (Hons) MCIEEM Licence No. 2025-85746-SCI-CL08.

RESULTS

Baseline Data

According to the Multi-agency website, there are no statutory designated sites located on or within the 2 km study area. The closest statutory designated site is Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 2.25 km to the north-west of the site. There are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) located on or adjacent to the site, with the nearest HPI being an area of Deciduous Woodland, also noted as National Forest Inventory, located approximately 0.33 km to the north of the site.

According to the Multi-agency website, no great crested newt licences have been granted within the 1 km study area. The nearest great crested newt EPSL was for the damage and destruction of a resting place (reference: 2014-718-EPS-MIT & 2015-14054-EPS-MIT), located approximately 2.5 km to the south-west of the site. The nearest Class Survey Licence Return with a positive result for great crested newts was located approximately 1.7 km to the south of the site.

Google Earth Imagery shows that site has remained largely unchanged since at least 2014 when most recent barn was constructed, being dominated by managed grassland, with a log cabin mobile home and agricultural buildings and hardstanding.

Walk-over Site Survey (Appendix A - Photographs 1-4)

The site is located off Broadcommon Road in Hurst, centred at National Grid Reference: SU808728 and covers approximately 0.2 of a hectare. The site is bordered by Broadcommon Road to the north-east, with a continuation of the site and fields to all other sides. The site is dominated by managed grassland, with a log cabin mobile home and agricultural buildings and hardstanding.

There are no ponds on site and therefore no breeding opportunities for amphibians. The site being dominated by managed grassland and hardstanding does not provide suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested newts, with no newts found sheltering under any refugia lifted during a careful search of the site. In addition, the plot is surrounded by heavily grazed fields/paddocks with the nearest pond being located approximately 160 m to the north-west of the site, with intervening habitat dominated by heavily grazed paddocks, which does not provide good connectivity to movement/migration.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposals are to construct a front porch and entrance into the existing building and remove the 'log cabin' mobile home. There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The species recorded on the site can be described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of/or suitable habitat to support great crested newts.

The area for the works lacks any suitable terrestrial habitat to support great crested newts, comprising a restricted area of well-maintained grassland and existing log cabin mobile home. Although the risk of encountering great crested newts on the site is considered to be low, as the site is within the amber risk zone, all site works will be carried out in accordance with the precautionary approach and follow the controls set out below:

Prior to the works commencing all site personnel will be given a toolbox talk to inform them about the potential presence of great crested newts and the legal protection they are given (toolbox talk has been attached at Appendix B).

The site should continue to be managed as before to maintain closely mown grassland.

The following additional controls will also be implemented during the works:

- Cover any trenches overnight to prevent any animals falling into them or the contractor must ensure that one end of the trench is shallow sloping such that any amphibians falling into the excavation can escape. The excavation will be checked for absence of great crested newts prior to works re-commencing.
- Do not leave any piles of bricks, tiles, building rubble etc close to the adjacent habitat as great crested newts may attempt to take refuge and/or overwinter in them.
- Store any building materials above ground on pallets.
- Any waste material will be placed into skips.
- Concrete will not be left unset overnight, or suitable barriers erected to prevent newts accessing the concrete.
- Excavations and working areas will be managed so that temporary waterbodies, which may attract newts onto the site, are not created.

In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is encountered during the works, all works at the site must cease immediately and AAe or Natural England contacted immediately for advice. Procedures will then be followed to obtain a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) or RBWM District Licence for the works.

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Appendix A
Photosheet



Photograph 1: Showing the managed grassland that dominated the site.



Photograph 2: Showing the mobile home log cabin to be removed.



Photograph 3: Showing the barn to be converted into residential accommodation.



Photograph 4: Showing the location of the proposed extension.

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
PROJECT 263088 Broadacre Place Hurst			
TITLE Photograph Record Sheet			
		AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk	
Scale	Date	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	16.03.26 Drawn NAB Chkd. ARB	Appendix A	

Appendix B
Toolbox Talk (Great Crested Newts)

TOOLBOX TALK: GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Key Contact

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell
Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042

Did you know?

- Great crested newts or **GCNs** are the largest and rarest species of newt found in the UK.
- Significant population declines, mostly due to habitat loss, has seen European and UK law introduced to protect GCNs.
- The UK is one of the final strongholds of GCNs, with an estimated population of 400,000 across the country.
- GCNs are amphibians and so use ponds for breeding, but spend much of their lives on land.
- For their survival, a link between a suitable breeding pond and terrestrial habitat is essential.
- During winter, GCNs will hibernate on land and may not wake up if disturbed. This makes them vulnerable to site works, especially during winter months.
- GCNs can be found in a range of habitats, be it rural or urban.
- GCNs, like many amphibians, are nocturnal and are consequently rarely seen during the day time.
- The lifespan of a GCN can be up to 15 years.

Identification

- GCNs may be found in a number of places around a site. When on land they tend to favour log/wood, stone and rubble piles. Breeding ponds are mainly medium-sized ponds, however, ditches and even large puddles may be used.
- Mature GCNs may grow up to about 17 cm long.
- Most of their skin is dark brown or black and warty in texture/appearance with an orange/yellow and black pattern on their tummy.
- During the breeding season adult males have a jagged crest running along their back, which only becomes clearly visible when in the water.

Legislation

- All amphibian species have some level of protection under UK law.
- GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.

Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that as GCNs move within the terrestrial habitat or between breeding ponds that they could be encountered during site works.
- If any GCNs are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 - If GCNs are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately**, with any GCNs left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 - Site operatives must not intentionally handle GCNs.
 - During works, operatives must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with GCNs.
 - Care must be taken when moving logs, stones or rubble, or when clearing areas near to ponds. These are favoured habitats for GCNs and they may be sheltering within them.
 - Stockpiling of materials is only permitted within designated areas.

These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You are not expected to be able to identify GCNs or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**

