

Date: 6 July 2026
Application: 252379



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Approval of Reserved Matters Consultation

Application Number: 252379

Applicant: E Walton

Site Address: Land to South of, Tope Crescent, Arborfield Green, Berkshire

Parish: Barkham

Grid Reference: Easting - 477062, Northing - 165394

Type of Development: Major Dwellings (10+)

Proposal: Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 for the erection of 67 dwellings with associated infrastructure, access and landscaping. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.

Please find attached a re-consultation on **revised plans** from the Development Management team for the above site. The documents associated with this are available to view in Information at Work. Below is a recommended consultation response template. We would be grateful if you could utilise this template for responses where appropriate. Once complete, please index this response into Information at Work against the application 252379.

The new details are as follows: **Revised plans received with amendments to the scheme including reduction to 65 no. dwellings and changes to the layout to address officer's comments during consultation.**

If you are recommending conditions please note that recommended conditions should also include reasons and relevant policies stating why the condition is required. A list of standard conditions can be requested from the case officer.

Your observations are required in respect of this application by **20 July 2026**. If you need any more information, please do not hesitate to contact the case officer Adriana González.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Berkshire District Licensing Officer	To (Case Officer):	Adriana González
Service	WBC Ecology Newts	App No:	252379
Address:	Land to South of, Tope Crescent, Arborfield Green, Berkshire.		
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Site Visit Made:	Yes/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 amber 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 amber impact zone, there is suitable habitat, and a high likelihood that great crested newts (GCN) may be present.
- There are 13 ponds within 500m of the development boundary. The closest of these are 2 ponds within approximately 20m of the sites southern border. Please note that not all ponds are displayed in the image below.
- There are recent (2020) records of GCN approximately 380m east of the application site.
- Highly suitable terrestrial habitat is present on the site in the form of tussocky grassland and dense scrub.
- 7 of the 13 ponds and 1 ditch were subject to further eDNA surveys. These returned a negative result indicating GCN likely absence. However, the pond approximately 380m east of the site with GCN records in 2020 was not subject to further surveys.



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 updated ecological documents in response to the initial consultation:

- Technical Note, Parcel N, Arborfield Green (RM application 252379 pursuant to outline consent O/2014/2280); GCN, ECOSUPPORT LTD., 1st July 2026.
- Technical Note, Arborfield Green Parcel N, Wokingham (O/2014/2280) – Reptile Mitigation Strategy Amendments, ECOSUPPORT LTD., 19th June 2026

Further information was required due to the sites highly suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN (tussocky grassland and dense scrub), it's proximity to a known GCN pond, a lack of clarity around which ponds had been surveyed, and why other ponds within 500m had not been surveyed. A comment by residents of 3 Stephenson Road on 15/10/2025 states: "In addition to the environmental survey not having found traces of great crested newts in the ponds, we do have them in our gardens, migrating in from the deep wet ditch that runs just behind the gardens." While no verified records of GCN were recorded on Stephenson Road, further survey of a potential wet ditch (visible on OS maps) was required, as well as an explanation for why only 6 of the off-site ponds were surveyed.

Technical Note GCN:

At the time of survey, the ditch running south of Stephenson Rd was dry and therefore, not surveyed. The pond that feeds into the ditch was surveyed (380m northeast of the site boundary), returning a negative eDNA result for GCN, indicating likely absence. No explanation for why other ponds had been scoped out of eDNA surveying was provided.

It was concluded that GCN are not present on the site, however “out of an abundance of caution, a passive dispersal strategy submitted by Ecosupport to address the very low population of Grass Snake on site will ensure that works are carried out in a way that account for the low risks of any amphibian presence on site (two stage strim, topsoil strip under ECoW supervision). If (in the unlikely event), any GCN are found during these works, works will stop and a licence sought from Natural England.”

Conclusions and recommendations

Due to the presence of highly suitable habitat on site, the records of GCN within 500m, and un-surveyed ponds within 500m, impacts to GCN cannot be ruled out. These risks are considered to be manageable via a precautionary method of working.

The precautionary working measures recommended in the Reptile Mitigation Strategy Amendments, ECOSUPPORT LTD., 19th June 2026 are considered to be mostly sufficient to cover impacts to GCN. However, the following should be added to provide cover for GCN:

- Immediately prior to the commencement of construction works, a suitably licensed and experienced ecologist should provide a Toolbox Talk to all site workers. This will cover identification of GCN and talk through safe working practices. Any site workers joining mid-project should receive a Toolbox Talk before starting work
- All excavations should either be backfilled overnight or contain an escape ramp, made from earth, rough sawn planks or wooden sticks, placed no steeper than a 45° angle.
- A statement that reads: ‘In the unlikely event that great crested newts are discovered during works, activities must be suspended in the affected area immediately and advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.’

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 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.

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 (December 2024), 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 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 Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017) 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".

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:

16/07/2026

Signed:

NatureSpace