

TITLE: **GREAT CRESTED NEWT STATEMENT**  
CLIENT: Mr & Mrs Draggon  
LOCATION: Land North of Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4TJ  
ISSUED: Tuesday, 4 August 2026

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# 1. Introduction

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- 1.1. This Great Crested Newt Statement has been prepared by Axiom Planning on behalf of Mr & Mrs Draggon in support of a full planning application at Land North of Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4TJ.
- 1.2. The application proposes one detached self-build dwelling, detached garage and store building, with associated access, parking, drainage, landscaping and woodland management.
- 1.3. Wokingham Borough Council's Local Validation List requires a Great Crested Newt Statement for a full planning application where the site lies within a mapped red or amber great crested newt risk zone. The site lies within an amber risk zone and this Statement is therefore submitted as a validation document.
- 1.4. The Statement draws principally on the Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (including Ground Level Tree Assessment for Bats), prepared by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP, Ref. R2354\_UpPEA\_c, dated June 2026 (the "Updated PEA"). The Updated PEA includes a desk study, a site walkover undertaken on 2 April 2026, a great crested newt habitat assessment and a site-specific impact assessment.
- 1.5. This Statement should be read alongside the Updated PEA. The ecological findings and professional assessment remain those of John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP; this document draws the relevant information into a concise validation statement and confirms the applicant's avoidance commitments.
- 1.6. The evidence does not establish confirmed absence of great crested newts. It demonstrates that there is no breeding pond on the site, no aquatic habitat will be affected and the site-specific risk of harming an individual newt is low. That limited residual risk will be controlled through the non-licensable reasonable avoidance measures set out in Section 6.

| Validation conclusion   |                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Risk-zone status</b> | Amber, according to the NatureSpace impact risk mapping reported in the Updated PEA.                             |
| <b>Aquatic habitat</b>  | No pond is present on the development site. No pond will be removed, altered or directly affected.               |
| <b>Nearest pond</b>     | Approximately 194m to the south-west at Handpost Farm; assessed in 2023 as poor habitat for great crested newts. |

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Records</b>            | No great crested newt records were returned by the 1km TVERC search, and no relevant survey-licence returns or EPS licence applications were identified within 2km. |
| <b>Site-specific risk</b> | Low / very low risk of an individual using the site for sheltering or movement; no identified risk to a breeding pond.                                              |
| <b>Proposed route</b>     | Non-licensable avoidance measures, ecological supervision and an immediate stop-work procedure.                                                                     |

## 2. Site and Development Context

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- 2.1. The site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 77529 66940. It lies on the northern side of Barkham Road in a semi-rural setting, with woodland and Barkham Brook to the north and west, residential properties to the east and west, and agricultural land to the south.
- 2.2. The development area assessed by the Updated PEA extends to approximately 0.29 hectares within the wider land surveyed by the ecologist. It comprises principally other neutral grassland, blackthorn scrub and scattered trees. These habitats can provide sheltering and foraging opportunities for amphibians, although they do not provide breeding habitat.
- 2.3. The wider land contains lowland mixed deciduous woodland, scrub, neutral grassland and a native hedgerow. A flowing ditch associated with Barkham Brook lies along or immediately beyond the northern ownership boundary. The woodland, scrub and ditch corridor are retained outside the principal development footprint.
- 2.4. The proposed works include localised vegetation clearance and ground disturbance for the dwelling, access, hardstanding, drainage and associated landscaping. The relevant potential effect is therefore accidental harm to a dispersing or sheltering individual during clearance or excavation, rather than loss or disturbance of a breeding pond.

### 3. Legislative and Validation Context

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- 3.1. Great crested newts are European protected species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The legislation protects the animals, their eggs, breeding sites and resting places.
- 3.2. Development must not deliberately capture, kill, injure or disturb great crested newts, damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection. Great crested newts must not be handled or moved unless authorised by an appropriate licence.
- 3.3. Wokingham Borough Council's Local Validation List states that a full planning application within a red or amber risk zone must include a Great Crested Newt Statement. The Statement may explain why harm is unlikely, identify non-licensable avoidance measures, provide survey evidence, set out a conventional licensing route or explain how the proposal will enter the district licensing scheme.
- 3.4. The Council's published guidance confirms that low-risk works can proceed without a licence where appropriate care and avoidance measures are applied. Wokingham also operates a district licensing scheme through NatureSpace, which remains available if the project ecologist or the Council later identifies a licensable risk.
- 3.5. Natural England's standing advice requires applicants to provide sufficient information to allow the planning authority to understand the likely effect on great crested newts and the measures proposed to avoid or mitigate harm. The site-specific ecological evidence and binding measures below provide that information for this application.

## 4. Great Crested Newt Evidence

- 4.1. The strategic NatureSpace model places the site in an amber risk zone. An amber designation indicates that suitable habitat, dispersal routes or great crested newt populations may occur in the wider area. It is a screening tool rather than confirmation that great crested newts are present on the application site.
- 4.2. The Updated PEA records that the TVERC desk study returned no great crested newt records within the 1km search area. A MAGIC search identified no great crested newt Class Survey Licence returns or European Protected Species mitigation licence applications within 2km of the site. The absence of records is not relied upon as proof of absence, but it forms part of the overall site-specific assessment.
- 4.3. There is no standing water within the development site. Four ponds were identified by mapping within 500m. Their approximate locations and relevance are summarised below.

| Waterbody                              | Approximate distance | Available evidence                                                           | Planning relevance                                                             |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Development site                       | On site              | No pond or other standing-water breeding habitat.                            | No aquatic breeding habitat is lost or altered.                                |
| Flowing ditch / Barkham Brook corridor | Northern boundary    | Flowing water; assessed as unsuitable for GCN breeding.                      | May provide occasional sheltering or movement habitat; retained and protected. |
| Handpost Farm pond                     | c.194m south-west    | Habitat Suitability Index assessment in 2023 rated the pond as poor for GCN. | Nearest mapped pond; separated from the works and not affected.                |
| Mapped pond                            | c.315m east          | No GCN pond-survey result reported in the Updated PEA.                       | Outside the immediate development area; no direct effect.                      |
| Mapped pond                            | c.390m east          | No GCN pond-survey result reported in the Updated PEA.                       | Outside the immediate development area; no direct effect.                      |
| Mapped pond                            | c.488m north-east    | No GCN pond-survey result reported in the Updated PEA.                       | At the outer edge of the 500m search area; no direct effect.                   |

- 4.4. The Updated PEA records that the Handpost Farm pond was assessed independently in 2023 and achieved a poor Habitat Suitability Index score. The northern ditch is flowing and does not provide suitable breeding conditions. It may, however, form part of a wider movement corridor and this possibility is addressed on a precautionary basis.
- 4.5. The site's tall grassland, scrub, woodland edge, dead wood and limited rubble or brick piles could be used by an individual amphibian for sheltering, foraging or hibernation. The Updated PEA therefore identifies a low risk that great crested newts could be present terrestrially and a very low risk that an individual could be affected by the proposed works.
- 4.6. No pond eDNA or population survey has been undertaken specifically for this application. The application does not claim confirmed absence. Instead, it relies on the current site-specific professional assessment, avoidance of all aquatic habitat and a precautionary construction method proportionate to the low residual risk.

## 5. Impact Assessment

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- 5.1. The proposal will not remove, fill, shade, drain or otherwise alter a pond. It will not sever direct access to a known breeding pond and will not affect a confirmed great crested newt population.
- 5.2. The development will result in localised loss and disturbance of neutral grassland and blackthorn scrub within the development area. These habitats are potentially suitable for terrestrial amphibian use, but they are not known to be used by great crested newts and are not immediately adjacent to a confirmed breeding pond.
- 5.3. The retained woodland, scrub, grassland, hedgerow and northern watercourse corridor will continue to provide habitat connectivity around the developed area. Construction exclusion fencing and pollution controls will protect these retained habitats.
- 5.4. The only credible pathway for harm is the accidental injury, killing or trapping of an individual great crested newt that may be dispersing through, sheltering within or hibernating in terrestrial habitat during vegetation clearance, material handling or excavation.
- 5.5. Having regard to the absence of a pond on site, the approximate 194m separation from the nearest mapped pond, the poor suitability of that pond, the lack of local records or licence data, the unsuitable breeding conditions in the flowing ditch and the retention of the main woodland and watercourse corridor, the Updated PEA concludes that this risk is low / very low.
- 5.6. The mitigation hierarchy has therefore been applied by avoiding aquatic habitat, retaining the principal connected habitats, minimising terrestrial habitat disturbance and adopting the reasonable avoidance measures in Section 6.

| Potential effect             | Unmitigated pathway                         | Control                                                                                  | Residual position     |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Breeding-pond loss or damage | No pond lies within the development site.   | All mapped ponds remain unaffected.                                                      | No effect identified. |
| Loss of terrestrial habitat  | Localised clearance of grassland and scrub. | Footprint minimised; connected woodland, scrub and ditch corridor retained and enhanced. | Low and localised.    |

|                              |                                                            |                                                                              |                   |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Injury during clearance      | Individual concealed in rubble, brash, grassland or scrub. | Hand removal under ecological supervision; timed outside hibernation period. | Very low.         |
| Trapping in excavations      | Individual enters trench or pit overnight.                 | Backfill before nightfall or install suitable escape ramps.                  | Very low.         |
| Temporary refuges            | Stored materials create sheltering places.                 | Store on hardstanding, raised on pallets or within skips.                    | Very low.         |
| Pollution / indirect effects | Runoff or spill reaches retained ditch or habitat.         | Construction fencing, exclusion zones and pollution-prevention procedures.   | Low / negligible. |

## 6. Reasonable Avoidance Measures

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- 6.1. The following measures are commitments of the application and will be incorporated into the construction information, the ecological construction method and the principal contractor's site procedures.

### Before vegetation clearance and groundworks

- A suitably qualified ecologist will provide a toolbox talk to the site manager and relevant contractors, explaining great crested newt identification, legal protection, sensitive habitats, working methods and the stop-work procedure.
- Retained woodland, scrub, hedgerow and the northern ditch corridor will be demarcated and protected with appropriate construction fencing. No vehicles, materials, fires or general construction activity will be permitted within the protected areas.
- Piles of rubble, bricks, brash and other potential refuges within the working area will be dismantled carefully by hand under the supervision of an ecologist.
- Removal of those potential refuges will take place outside the main hibernation period identified in the Updated PEA, namely late October to February inclusive, unless the project ecologist confirms an alternative safe method.

### During construction

- Open excavations and trenches will be backfilled before nightfall. Where that is not practicable, a suitable escape ramp will be installed to enable amphibians and other small animals to leave unaided.
- Building materials and excavated materials awaiting use or disposal will be stored on hardstanding and raised off the ground on pallets, or placed in skips, so they do not create temporary resting or hibernation places.
- Pollution-prevention measures will be implemented to avoid fuel, cement, silt, dirty water or other contaminants entering retained habitats or the northern watercourse corridor.
- Site lighting during construction will be kept to the minimum necessary and directed away from the retained woodland, scrub and northern watercourse corridor.

## Stop-work procedure

- If a suspected great crested newt is encountered, works in the affected area will stop immediately. The animal will not be handled or moved by site personnel.
- The area will be made safe and a suitably qualified, appropriately licensed ecologist will attend. Work will resume only after written ecological advice has been provided and any necessary authorisation has been obtained.
- Where the ecologist concludes that the works would constitute a licensable activity, the relevant district-level or Natural England mitigation licence will be secured before the affected work proceeds.

## 7. Licensing Strategy and Review Triggers

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- 7.1. The Updated PEA does not identify a need for licensable great crested newt mitigation. It recommends a non-licensable precautionary approach because the site-specific risk is low and no breeding pond or confirmed resting place will be affected.
- 7.2. The application is therefore advanced on a non-licensable reasonable-avoidance route. No great crested newt will be captured, handled or translocated under this approach.
- 7.3. Wokingham Borough Council operates a district licensing scheme delivered through NatureSpace. If the final construction design, updated ecological evidence or an unexpected finding indicates that licensable risk cannot be avoided, the applicant will secure authorisation through the Council's district licence or a conventional Natural England European Protected Species mitigation licence before the relevant works begin.
- 7.4. The project ecologist will review the position before site clearance where there has been a material change to the scheme, habitats, pond context or available species records. An updated ecological review will also be undertaken if the age or condition of the ecological evidence means it no longer represents the site at the time works are due to commence.
- 7.5. This adaptive safeguard ensures that the development will not rely on an outdated low-risk conclusion and that any change in circumstances will be addressed before potentially harmful operations take place.

## 8. Habitat Retention and Enhancement

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- 8.1. The GCN avoidance strategy forms part of the wider ecological design. The principal woodland, scrub, native hedgerow and northern watercourse corridor will be retained and protected, preserving connected terrestrial habitat around the development.
- 8.2. The wider landscape and ecological strategy includes native planting, management of retained neutral grassland and scrub, woodland-edge enhancement, retention of dead wood where safe, and habitat features such as log piles and hibernacula. These measures will improve structural diversity and provide additional sheltering and foraging opportunities for amphibians and other wildlife.
- 8.3. The detailed implementation, timing and long-term management of these measures will be coordinated with the project ecologist and set out in the final Landscape and Ecological Management Plan or equivalent approved management document.

## 9. Conclusion

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- 9.1. The site lies within an amber great crested newt risk zone and a Great Crested Newt Statement is therefore required by Wokingham Borough Council for validation of the full planning application.
- 9.2. The Updated PEA provides a current, site-specific assessment. There is no pond within the development site; the nearest mapped pond is approximately 194m away and was assessed as poor habitat; the northern ditch is unsuitable for breeding; and no local great crested newt records or relevant licence data were identified by the desk study.
- 9.3. The proposal will not affect aquatic breeding habitat. The limited risk is accidental harm to an individual using terrestrial habitat during construction. That risk is low / very low and will be reduced through ecological supervision, careful hand removal of potential refuges, excavation safeguards, controlled material storage, habitat protection, pollution prevention and an immediate stop-work procedure.
- 9.4. The application accordingly provides the information required by the Local Validation List: it explains why material harm is unlikely, identifies the non-licensable measures that will avoid harm and confirms the contingency licensing route if the ecological position changes.
- 9.5. On that basis, the Great Crested Newt Statement requirement is satisfied and no further great crested newt survey is required for validation of the application. The development will proceed only in accordance with the ecological safeguards set out above and any further advice of the project ecologist or the Local Planning Authority.

## 10. Appendix 1 - Site Manager's GCN Avoidance Checklist

10.1. This checklist is to be incorporated into the construction-phase ecological information and completed by the site manager before and during the relevant works.

| Stage           | Required action                                                                                                                    | Responsibility           | Complete                 |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Before works    | Ecologist reviews final working area and confirms the avoidance method remains appropriate.                                        | Ecologist                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Before works    | Toolbox talk completed for site manager and relevant contractors.                                                                  | Ecologist / contractor   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Before works    | Retained woodland, scrub, hedgerow and northern ditch corridor fenced and excluded.                                                | Contractor               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Before works    | Rubble, brick and brash piles removed carefully by hand under ecological supervision and outside the principal hibernation period. | Ecologist / contractor   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Construction    | Excavations backfilled before nightfall or fitted with suitable escape ramps.                                                      | Site manager             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Construction    | Materials stored on hardstanding, pallets or in skips; no ground-level refuges created.                                            | Site manager             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Construction    | Pollution controls in place; no runoff or contaminants entering retained habitat or watercourse.                                   | Site manager             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Construction    | Temporary lighting minimised and directed away from retained habitat corridors.                                                    | Site manager             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unexpected find | Stop works, do not handle the animal, protect the area and call the project ecologist.                                             | All personnel            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Close-out       | Ecological incidents and any unexpected finds recorded and reported as advised.                                                    | Site manager / ecologist | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10.2. **Project ecologist:** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP, or another suitably qualified project ecologist appointed before commencement.



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