



DARWIN
ECOLOGY

integrating nature conservation

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██████ Philips
Poundlane Cottage
Pound Lane
Hurst
Reading
RG10 0RS

3rd September 2026

Re: Precautionary Method Statement for Great Crested Newt at Poundlane Cottage, Pound Lane, Hurst, Reading, RG10 0RS

Background

Darwin Ecology Ltd. were instructed by Daley Philips to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at the site Poundlane Cottage, Pound Lane, Hurst, Reading, RG10 0RS. These assessments were required to inform planning application 260049. As part of the BNG assessment, the wider site area was subject to a habitat walkover to inform the potential for biodiversity enhancements within the wider site ownership.

The wider site area is currently subject to a new planning application (reference 261880) to convert the existing outbuilding to habitable accommodation with associated areas of hard and soft landscaping.

It was identified during the habitat walkover, undertaken by Consultant Ecologist Eleanor Kemp BSc (Hons) MSc on the 16th December 2026, that the application site (for application 261880) comprises areas of developed land; sealed surface, modified grassland, individual trees, and a line of trees.

The grassland on site comprises a goat-grazed area of modified grassland, with a short sward which measured approximately 15cm-20cm in height on average across the parcel. Some slight variability in the sward height was recorded, with the sward ranging

between 5cm and 30cm. Due to its short sward and regular management, this parcel of grassland was assessed to be of low value to amphibians.

The habitats on site were considered to be suboptimal to support individuals or populations of great crested newt or common amphibians. Due to the presence of waterbodies within proximity to the site, it was considered that individual amphibians present within the wider landscape may pass through the site on occasion.

As such, it was recommended that a Precautionary Method of Works be followed throughout the development period in order to protect individual amphibians which may be on site during the works.

Precautionary Method of Works

Due to the low potential for individual great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* to be present on site, the works will take place under a Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) for great crested newt (GCN). A PMW details a method of works to ensure the construction does not impact GCN, their breeding sites, or their resting places, all of which are protected by UK and European law.

The below PMW details how impacts upon GCN will be minimised and/or avoided throughout the development process, thereby avoiding the need for the development to obtain a licence or undertake mitigation processes such as translocation exercises.

It is proposed that the mitigation measures employed include the following measures (as appropriate):

- *Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)*: An ECoW will be appointed to provide a watching brief during all site works which have the potential to impact GCN. The ECoW will be a suitably experienced ecologist who is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Managers (CIEEM). The ecologist will hold, or be an Accredited Agent under a GCN survey licence from Natural England. At no point should any unlicensed worker handle a GCN or a suspected GCN. Unlicensed handling is illegal, and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.
- *Supervision*: All works which will impact habitat suitable to support GCN will be supervised by the appropriately licensed and qualified ECoW (as mentioned above). This supervision will involve walking in front of the works and conducting a fingertip search of the development area. Should any amphibians be identified within the works area, they should be moved to an area of suitable habitat outside of the development boundary (see Appendices).
- *Toolbox Talk*: A toolbox talk will be delivered by a GCN licensed ecologist to the Site Manager and all site operatives prior to commencement of work on site. The toolbox talk will detail the protection measures required during construction, and will induct

contractors on the potential to encounter GCN and other protected species such as reptiles, amphibians, birds and hedgehogs, where they may be found, what they look like, the legal protection afforded, and best practice methodologies. A laminated summary of the identification of GCN and other UK amphibians will be provided for the Site Office with contact numbers of a licensed GCN ecologist to contact if any are found.

- *Timings:* All works which may impact great crested newt should be undertaken during the day and in suitable weather conditions (above 10°C, light breeze, and dry). All works should be undertaken during the GCN key active season (March-September, inclusive). This will allow active amphibians to move to areas of more suitable habitat outside the development footprint, if they are present within the working area.
- *Fingertip search:* A fingertip search of the development area will be conducted by a GCN licensed ecologist immediately prior to the works commencing on each day of supervision, to ensure an absence of amphibians within the development boundary. If any individuals are found, they will be removed by hand and placed in an area of suitable habitat within the wider site area. The ECoW may move a low number of individual GCN (up to five) during the works period without a project licence being in place. Should more than five individuals require translocation during the works period, all works should halt, and an appropriate licence should be applied for. The works may only recommence once the appropriate licence has been obtained.
- *Access routes:* Works will be restricted to the designated development area, and the impact of works on adjacent habitats will be avoided by the clear demarcation of the works area. A pre-agreed access plan should be produced prior to works commencing, outlining key access routes through the site to aid in restricting vehicular movement across the site. These access routes should be laid with track matting to ensure minimal impact to habitat at ground level.
- *Maintaining Unsuitable Habitats:* Vegetation on site will be maintained as mown/cut/ grazed short (sward <100mm) until construction commences to maintain the sub-optimal nature of these habitats for amphibians.
- *Two-stage Cut:* Should the grassland habitats or areas of vegetation grow longer than 30cm in height, they will be cleared via a two-stage cut under supervision by a suitably qualified ecologist. This will involve strimming under the careful supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist during temperatures above 10°C. The strimming will be carried out in a two-stage cut, with the first cut to 15cm and the second to ground level. This cut will take place in one direction, from east to west, towards the retained areas of on-site habitat in order to give any newts a chance to leave the development area and disperse to the wider landscape.

- *Arising Removal:* All arising from any strimming and vegetation clearance will be immediately removed from the works area to prevent any newts from sheltering within it.
- *Protective fencing:* Heras fencing with a kickboard will be placed around the boundaries of the development area. Screening barriers will be implemented on the habitat protection fencing along the boundaries of the development during the construction phase of the development, to prevent dust and waste from the construction site from contaminating the retained habitats on site and within the wider site boundary. Once the fencing is installed, a fingertip search of the development area will be conducted by a GCN-licensed ecologist to ensure an absence of amphibians within the development boundary. If any individuals are found, they will be removed by hand and placed in an area of suitable habitat within the wider site area.
- A buffer of at least 10m will be maintained between the development boundary and the waterbody, which will be retained within the wider site boundary, in the unlikely event that GCN are present.
- *Hibernacula identification:* No existing hibernacula (deadwood, fallen trees, brash piles, etc.) with the potential to support hibernating GCN can be disturbed during the months of November to January. Hibernacula that fall within the designated works area will either need to be fenced off during this period or they will need to be identified, dismantled and moved off-site under ECoW supervision outside of these critical months to ensure that hibernating individuals are not disturbed. No potential hibernacula were identified on site during the habitat walkover survey.
- *Material Storage:* In order to avoid creating suitable refuges for reptiles and amphibians during construction, all stored materials should be raised off the ground on pallets or skids. Aggregates, such as gravel or sand, must be delivered in bulk bags and stored on pallets
- *Excavations:* Any excavations or trenches on site must be covered whilst works are paused (such as overnight), or a ramp should be provided in order to prevent animals from becoming trapped. Open excavations should be sloped to prevent entrapment.

Should Newts Be Found During Works

- In the unlikely event that GCN or common amphibians are found within the development area during the works, the nominated licensed ecologist and project manager should be notified. The ECoW may move a low number of individual GCN during the works period; however, no more than five individuals may be moved off-site without an appropriate licence being in place.
- If five adult GCN are found over the duration of the works period and have to be moved to a habitat away from the development footprint, it will be classed as a

disturbance. Should this occur, then works will stop immediately and the land agent managing the project will be notified.

- Development cannot continue until an appropriate licence (either a Natural England GCN Development Licence or a NatureSpace District Licence) has been applied for and obtained.

Overall, Darwin Ecology Ltd. assesses that any likely impacts to newts and other amphibians within the local area are low and that, due to the small amount of habitat removal, an offence is unlikely.

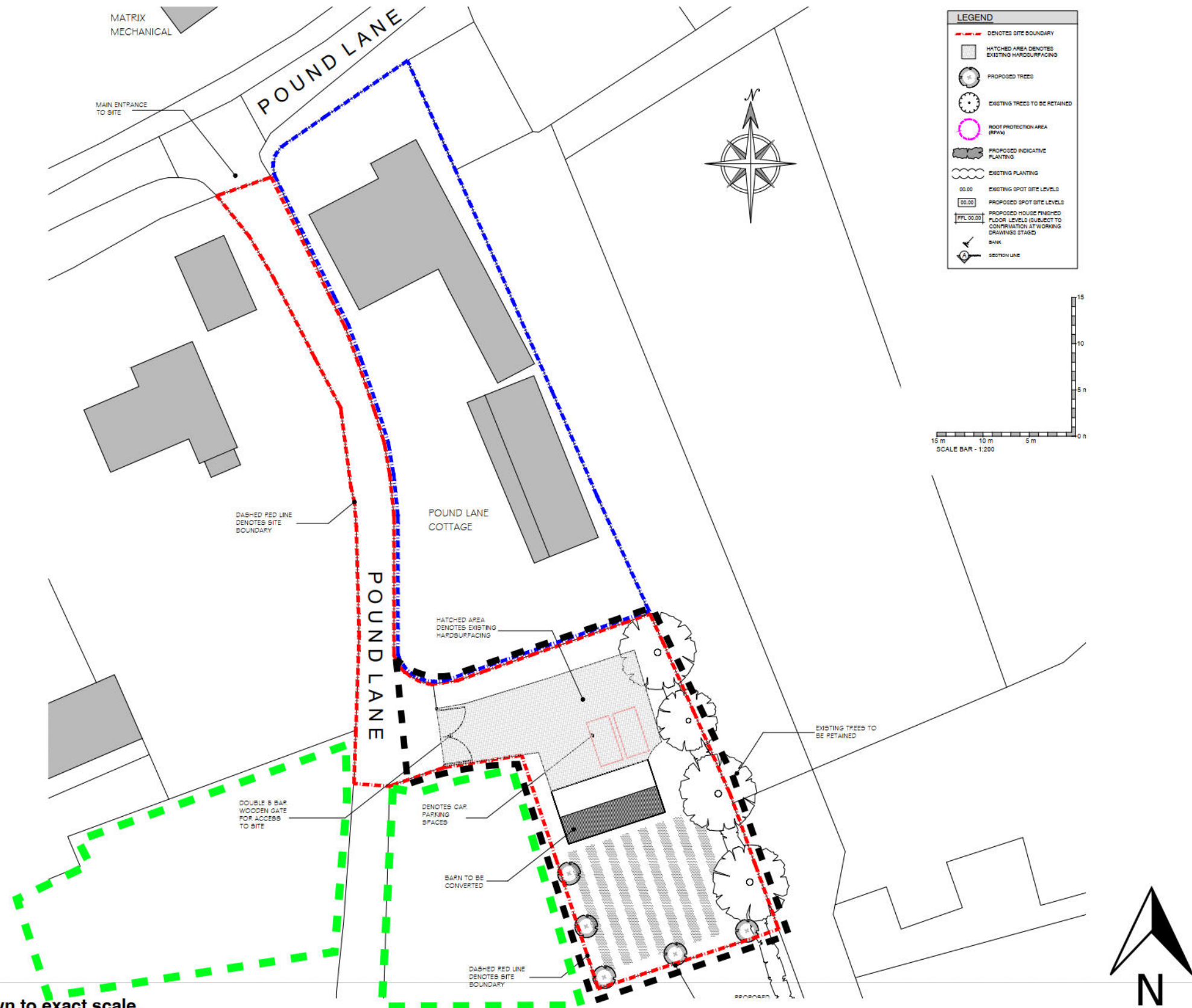
If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Eleanor Kemp BSc (Hons) MSc

Consultant Ecologist, Darwin Ecology Ltd



Areas of suitable habitat within the wider site boundary, comprising areas of modified grassland (right) and sparsely vegetated urban land (left) where individual amphibians should be moved to if they are encountered within the development area.



Heras fencing will be installed around the boundaries of the development site. Screening barriers will be implemented on the heras fencing on all boundaries of the development area. A kickboard will be installed along the base of the heras fencing on the western boundary of the development area.



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Appendix: Mitigation Map

Date: September 2026