

March 2025

GCN STATEMENT

94 Ryeish Lane
Spencers Wood
Wokingham
RG7 1SS

Re: 03025

GCN Statement in support of the application at 94 Ryeish Lane, Spencers Wood. (Precautionary Method Statement)

Introduction

This statement is provided in support of an application for a single storey rear extension, proposed loft conversion into habitable accommodation plus the installation of roof lights and changes to fenestration.

The proposal is highly unlikely to have any impact on GCN for the following reasons:

- The project is a modest size single storey extension. The footprint of the proposal is approximately 26m². Given the footprint of the works, the distance to the nearest pond at approximately 120m and working under the assumption that GCN are present, it is 'Highly unlikely' that the proposal will cause an offence relating to GCN under all relevant legislation. This is informed using Natural England's rapid risk assessment tool as seen below.
- The proposed extension will take place on existing hardstanding (block pavement) which represents a sub-optimal habitat for GCN. It is unlikely that GCN would be found within the vicinity of the proposed footprint.
- The proposed development site is surrounded by brick walls at the East boundary, close boarded timber fenced on the south and part timber close boarded timber fenced and part brick

boundary for the west boundary which further reduces the chances of GCN migrating toward the existing building.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.0005
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.005
Rapid risk assessment result:		GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY

Figure 1 - Natural England's rapid risk assessment tool

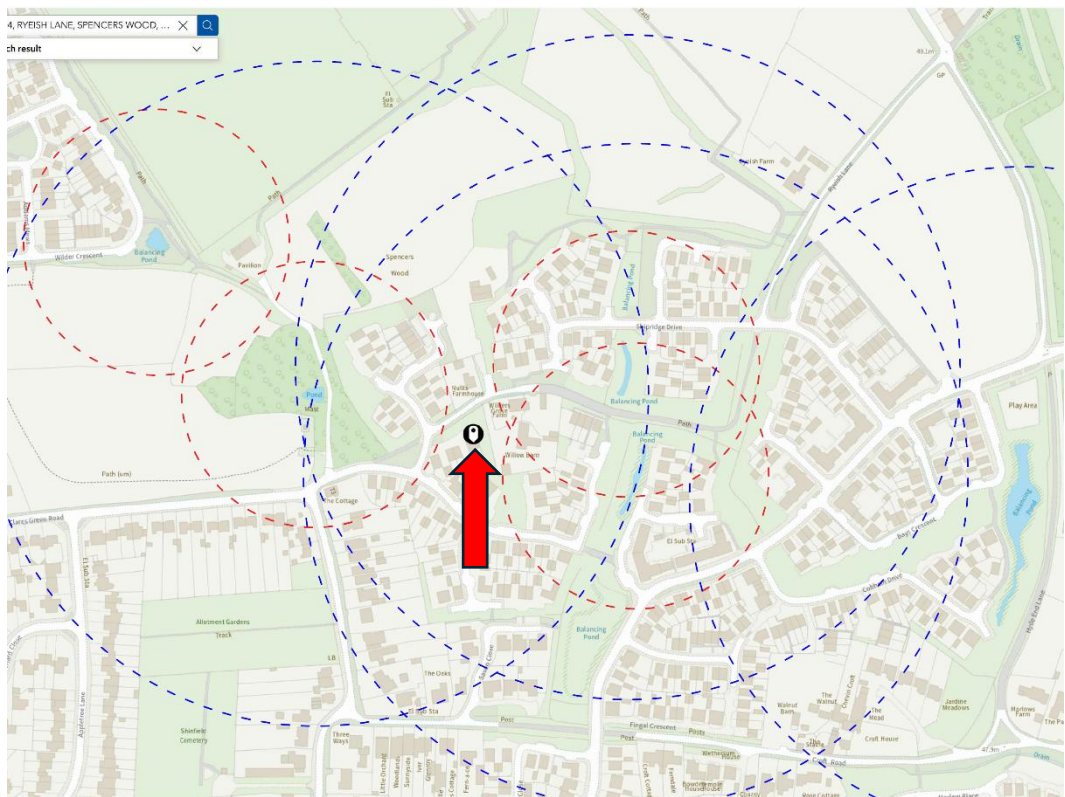


Figure 2 - Approximate distances from the nearest ponds

Precautionary Method Statement

Legislation:

The basic protection afforded to great crested newts is listed below:
It is illegal to:

- deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) great crested newts
- deliberately disturb great crested newts
- deliberately take or destroy the eggs of great crested newts
- recklessly disturb great crested newts while it is occupying a structure of place which is uses for shelter or protection or obstruct access to their places of shelter or protection;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of great crested newts;
- possess or transport a great crested newt or any part of a great crested newt, unless acquired legally;
- sell (or offer for sale) or exchange great crested newts or parts of great crested newts.

If GCN are found at any point during the development or activities outlined below, **works must stop and an appropriately qualified ecologist should be contacted for advice, as well as Natural England.**

Contractors are prohibited from handling GCN.

Induction of contractors

- A toolbox talk will be given to all site personnel in order to make them aware of the possible presence of GCN, how to identify this species and the avoidance measures to be used on site.
- A paper copy of the avoidance measures will be retained on site together with the contact details of a GCN licensed ecologist.
- Site staff must be made aware that if great crested newts are found onsite there is a correct procedure in place to follow, and failure to halt works may result in committing an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2010.
- A handout containing information on what to look for and identifying newts is included at the end of this document and should be made available to all site staff.

Timing and duration

- Given that the works will impact existing hardstanding, ground works/excavations can take place at any time of the year provided the precautionary methods set out below are used.
- Any work which will not disturb potential hibernation habitat (e.g. hedgerow base, tree roots, old walls, mammal burrows, rubble piles

may be carried out at any time of the year, when GCN are rarely active above ground.

- All works should take place during daylight hours when GCN are unlikely to be moving around the area.

Construction methods and special precautions

- All excavations on site will be covered at night or ramps will be provided allow amphibians to exit excavations between March and October.
- All excavations will be checked for amphibians each morning prior to the recommencement of the works.
- All exposed new pipework and drains will be capped at night so as to avoid trapping amphibians.
- All excavated materials/debris will be stored in skips or similar and not on the ground where it could be used as a refuge/resting area by amphibians. Alternatively, all waste will be removed from the site daily.
- All stored building materials that might be used as temporary resting places by amphibians will be stored off the ground on pallets or similar.
- Any work that will result in temporary habitat disruption and reinstatement, such as laying services needs ecological supervision.

If a newt is found:

- **If it is suspected that a Great Crested Newt has been found, work must be suspended and the advice of a suitably licensed GCN ecologist sought.** A Natural England development license may be required before works can continue. This may entail considerable delays and costs.
- Should the project over run significantly (by more than 1-2 years) then further advice must be sought to determine whether additional survey or licensing are required before work continues.
- At no point should any worker handle a Great Crested Newt or suspected Great Crested Newt. Unlicensed handling is illegal and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.

Great Crested Newt

Identifying great crested newts (Information taken from the Great Crested Newt Handbook)

- The great crested newt is the UK's largest newt, reaching a maximum adult overall length of up to about 170mm.
- Mature female length ranges from 90 - 170mm, typically reaching 110-130mm.
- Male newts may mature at a length of only 85mm (normally more), and grow to an adult maximum of about 150mm, though more typically 110-120mm.
- Adults are easily distinguished from the two other native newt species, the smooth and palmate newts, by size and colouring; these two smaller species reach a maximum of around 100mm.
- **The skin of adult crested newts is granular in appearance. It has a black or dark brown background colour with darker spots that in males extend onto the crest. It has very fine white spots on the lower flanks.**



- The male (below) has a jagged crest along the back that dips at the rear of the abdomen, and a smoother edged crest above and below the tail. The crest decreases in size outside the breeding season. There is a white, silver or grey stripe running from the tail tip along the central, fleshy section of the tail that fades as it approaches the abdomen.



- Females (below) lack a crest and white tail stripe, but have a yellow-orange stripe running along the bottom edge of the tail. Both sexes have a vivid orange or yellow belly with an irregular pattern of dark black spots or blotches.

- On land, the great crested newt appears virtually black, and in males the crest shrinks back against the body. Males of all newts have a relatively more swollen cloaca (vent).



Comparison: Great Crested Newt (darker) & Smooth Newt



- On leaving the water, great crested newt juveniles are similar in appearance to adults, apart from lacking the black spots/patterns that develop on the orange belly as they grow. The pattern becomes 'fixed' as the adults approach maximum size.

Fig. 1 Typical growth and development of great crested newt shown at approximately life size

