

By email only

To: Phil Everington
Hinton Lodge,
Hinton Hatch,
Twyford,
Reading,
RG10 0LT

Tel: 01189 759387
Email: giles@gsecology.co.uk

10 February 2026
Our reference: ECO4012

Dear Phil,

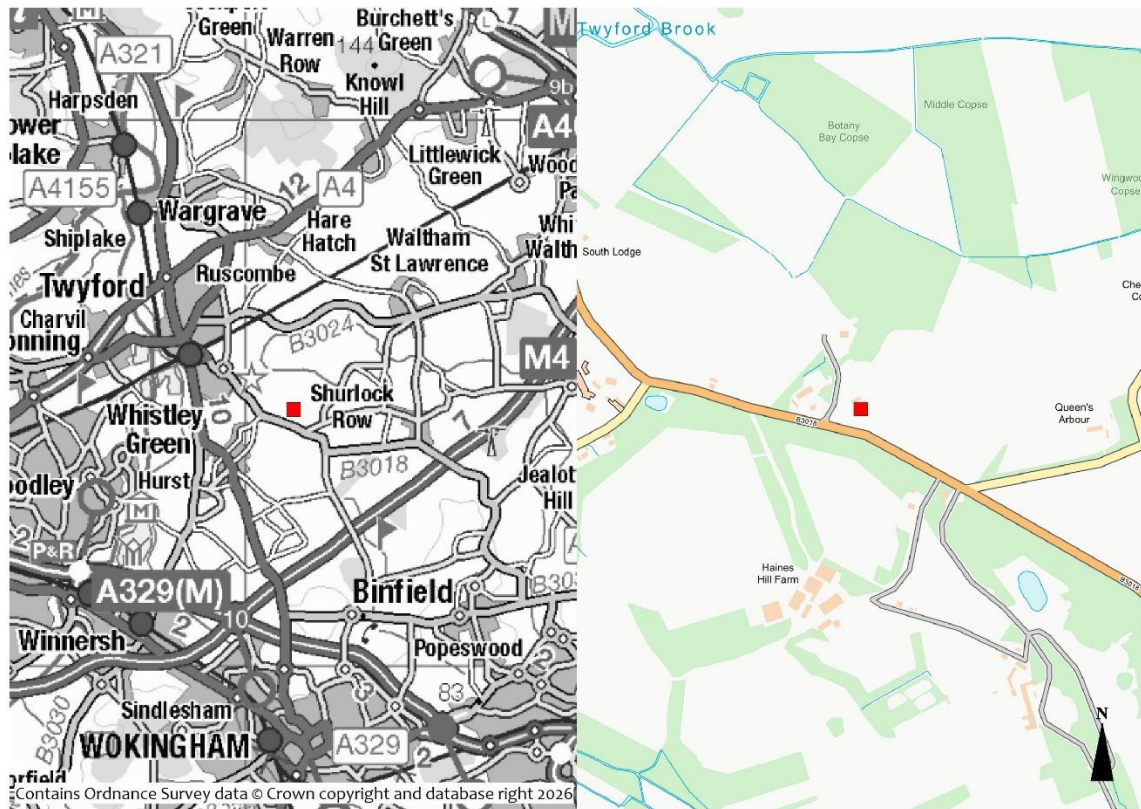
Re: Great Crested Newt Statement – Hinton Lodge, Hinton Hatch, Twyford, Reading, RG10 0LT

- 1.1 I am writing following our great crested newt (GCN) assessment at the site with details of the findings from the visit and way forwards recommendations.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 A householder planning application has been submitted to Wokingham Borough Council for the erection of a new orangery at the above site.
- 2.2 The planning application reference is 260014.
- 2.3 The application was deemed to be invalid by Wokingham Council on 7 January 2026 for two reasons, one of which concerned GCN. The letter from the council reads:
- “2. The application site is located in an Great Crest Newt Impact Risk Zone as identified on the Wokingham Planning Constraints Map. The application requires submission of a statement to demonstrate how to safeguard against the risk of harming GCN. Please complete a statement and email it to the address below. For more information on this, please see the NatureSpace Partnership website: <https://naturespaceuk.com/>”
- 2.4 You asked me to carry out a GCN site visit and produce a site specific “Great Crested Newt Statement”.
- 2.5 I am a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental management and a Chartered Environmentalist. I have more than 20 professional years’ experience as professional ecologist and hold a CL08 Level 1 Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence (reference: 2015-16712-CLS-CLS).

Figure 1 – Site location



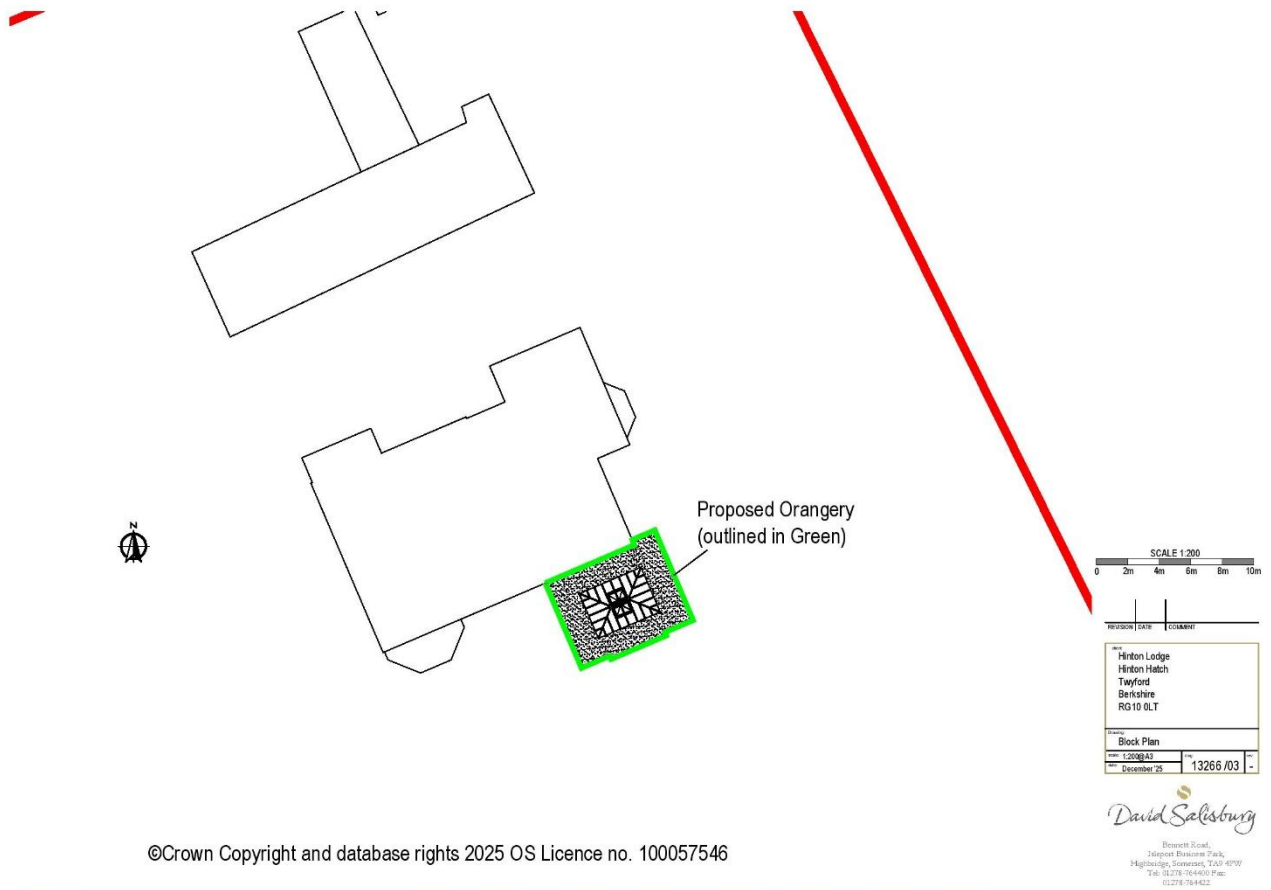
3.0 Proposed works

- 3.1 It is proposed to erect a single storey orangery. The orangery will be located on a flagstone patio to the south of the house (see Figure 2).
- 3.2 The proposed plans are given in Figure 3.

Figure 2 – Location of the proposed orangery



Figure 3 - Proposed layout plan and elevations



4.0 GCN legislation and ecology

- 4.1 GCN receive special protection under UK law and it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations) to deliberately or recklessly destroy or damage their habitat, or to disturb, kill or harm them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).
- 4.2 GCN spend most of their lives on land, within up to 500m of a breeding pond. The most important terrestrial habitat is within 100m, where most of the population are likely to be located foraging, resting, sheltering and hibernating relatively close to their breeding site. However, a proportion of the population is also likely to forage for food and shelter in suitable habitats up to 250m from a breeding pond and juvenile animals have been known to disperse up to 500m from it in a single season.
- 4.3 GCN are likely to be disturbed by any work that involves altering their breeding pond (e.g. by introducing fish or deepening or altering its size) or works that involve clearing land up to 500m around ponds, where such land has been managed and maintained in such a way that it is likely to support GCN. In such cases a licence for derogation from the provisions of the habitat regulations may need to be obtained.
- 4.4 In addition, GCN are a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (these are the "priority species" as per the NPPF).

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 A desk study data search was undertaken for ecological data within the zone of influence of the survey area (considered to be a maximum of 500m in this case). This involved:
 - (1) Accessing species records on Natural England's MAGIC website [<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>]
 - (2) Studying aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey maps for nearby ponds
 - (3) Reviewing the NatureSpace district licence impact risk map
- 5.2 A walkover survey of the site was undertaken on 28 January 2026. Weather conditions during the survey were temperature 6°C, cloud cover 3/8ths, wind at Beaufort scale 2 with no rain. During the survey the site was assessed in terms of its suitability for GCN.

6.0 Findings

Desk study

- 6.1 There are no records of GCN licences being issued within 500m of the site.
- 6.2 The MAGIC website has a layer which shows "presence only" records for great crested newts (GCN) determined through class licence surveys. There are no "presence only" records of GCN within 2km of the application site.
- 6.3 There is a layer on the MAGIC website which shows the results of great crested newt (GCN) eDNA surveys and HSI appraisals of ponds, carried out between 2017 - 2019¹. There are no records of the results of great crested newt (GCN) eDNA surveys and HSI appraisals of ponds within 2km of the application site.

¹ Great Crested Newt eDNA and Habitat Suitability Index Survey results for Ponds surveyed for District Level Licensing.

- 6.4 The NatureSpace “Impact Risk Map”² shows the site as being located within the “Red Zone”, defined as “highly suitable habitat – the most important areas for great crested newts”.

Habitats surrounding the application site

- 6.5 The application site is located on the junction between Hinton Hatch and Waltham Road (B3018), to the south east of Twyford.
- 6.6 Adjacent to the west of the site is a residential property and its associated garden. Further west is an agricultural yard with a number of agricultural buildings actively in use.
- 6.7 Agricultural fields about the site on the northern and eastern boundaries.

Habitats within the application site

- 6.8 The application site comprises a large detached house, two outbuildings, a large gravel drive and surrounding gardens.
- 6.9 The grounds have large well maintained amenity grassland lawns with well kept flower and shrub beds. There are scattered trees, with additional trees at the peripheries of the site within the hedgerows.
- 6.10 Around the house are areas of hardstanding (gravel paths and flagstone patios). There are also flowerbeds and areas of introduced shrub planting.
- 6.11 In the north western area of the application site is a swimming pool which is surrounded by a flagstone patio.

Nearby ponds

- 6.12 There are five ponds shown on ordnance survey maps within 500m of the application site (see Figure 4).
- 6.13 The closest pond (Pond 1) is located approximately 50m west of the site and is separated from the proposed new orangery by a swimming pool (and associated patio), two large buildings, and a gravel drive (see Figure 5). It is in a neighbouring land holding and was not accessible as it was behind a 2.4m high close board fence.
- 6.14 There are no other ponds within 100m of the application site and the next nearest pond to the south of the application site is approximately 400m away.

² The “Impact Risk Map” is the accepted statutory guidance that Local Planning Authorities must take into account when considering the risk of development for great crested newts. naturespaceuk.com/the-scheme/impact-map/

Figure 4 – Nearby ponds.

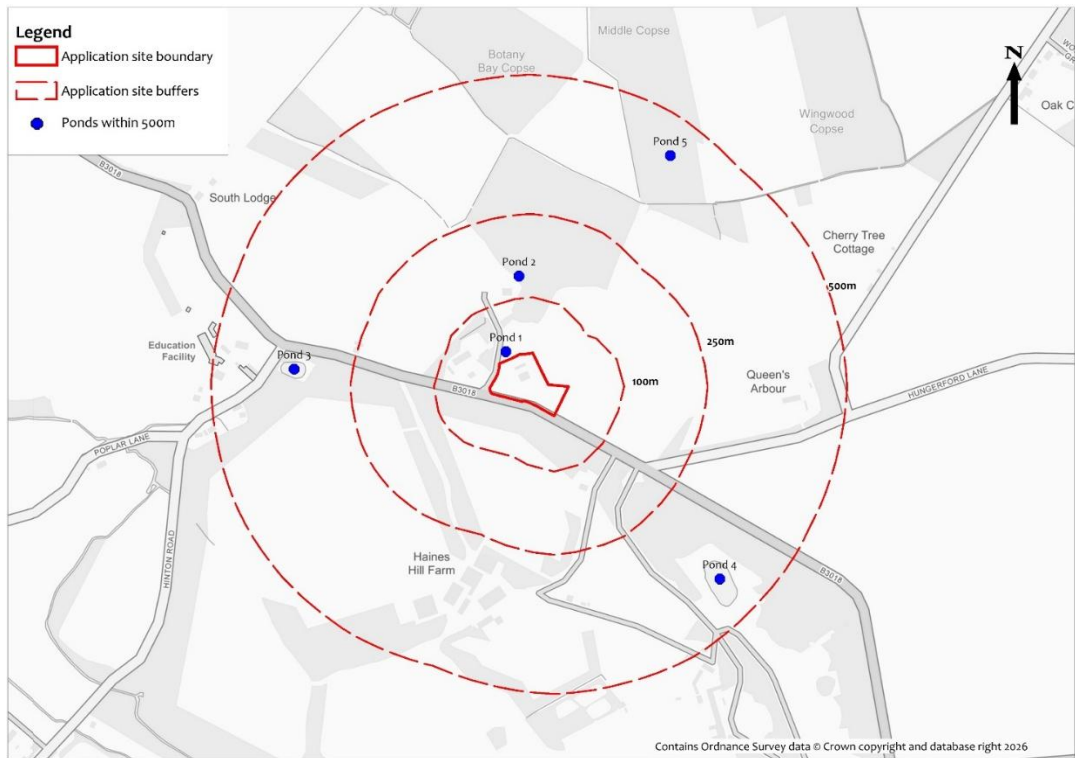


Figure 5 – Google maps aerial photo showing Pond 1 and pertinent habitat features within the application site



7.0 Assessment and way forward recommendations

- 7.1 The NatureSpace “Impact Risk Map” shows the site as being located within the “Red zone”, defined as “highly suitable habitat – the most important areas for GCN”.
- 7.2 The proposals will involve the construction of an orangery 6m x 7m in size. The orangery will be located mainly on a well maintained flagstone patio, and partially on an empty shrub bed, a gravel path and a short cut lawn (see Figure 2).
- 7.3 These habitats are largely unsuitable for GCN and are separated from the nearest pond by a swimming pool, a gravel drive and two large buildings (Figure 5). It is therefore highly unlikely (but not impossible) that GCN will be found when works are being carried. This is confirmed by applying Natural England's risk assessment given in their GCN licence method statement template³ an offence under the Habitat Regulations is considered to be "highly unlikely" (see Table 1).

Table 1 - Risk assessment for great crested newts as per Natural England's Great Crested Newt method statement in the event that Pond 1 were to be a great crested newt breeding pond.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.05
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
		Maximum: 0.05
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

- 7.4 However to further minimise the risk of harm to GCN the following method statement will be followed:
- (1) A toolbox talk will be given to the site manager and any contractors working on the site. It will explain that GCN could be found, explain what they look like, and that GS Ecology must be contacted if any are found.
 - (2) The flagstone paving will be removed by hand, under the direct supervision of a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist. The turf will also be stripped at the same time using a spade.
 - (3) During construction all building materials will be kept off the ground and stored on pallets.
 - (4) Any bulk materials such as sand which cannot be stored off the ground will be covered with a tarpaulin overnight to prevent GCN from sheltering within it.
 - (5) All excavations will be checked for GCN at the start of each morning by the contractor.
 - (6) In the unlikely situation that a GCN is found during works, all works will stop immediately, GS Ecology will be contacted (GCN will be moved to a nearby safe place) and works will not continue until any requisite licence has been obtained from Natural England.
- 7.5 Alternatively, to avoid the risk of having to stop works should GCN be found, the site could be registered under the NatureSpace Partnership GCN District Licence (see below). However, as the risk of finding GCN is very low, this should not be necessary for this planning application.

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879595/gcn-method-statement.xlsm

8.0 Naturespace District Licence

- 8.1 The NatureSpace Partnership has designed a GCN District Licence (DL) scheme with participating local planning authorities (including Wokingham Council) and the freshwater and amphibian NGOs in the UK. The scheme gives applicants the opportunity to access an alternative GCN licensing option whereby they do not need to provide newt survey information with their planning application or to apply for a site specific licence. Instead NatureSpace provide an impact report and certificate that are submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) with the planning application.
- 8.2 The steps required to obtain a district level licence are as follows:
- Apply to NatureSpace for a DL impact report and certificate. The impact report will detail how the development will be dealt with under the DL.
 - Submit the impact report and certificate to the LPA. They can then grant planning permission for the works subject to conditions requiring the licence to be adhered to. When planning permission is granted the licence is, in effect, granted.
 - NatureSpace provide compensatory habitat (including four ponds for every pond lost) within the wider landscape, manage and monitor these habitats and monitor the GCN population more widely.
 - For householder development, a fixed fee of £500 is charged by NatureSpace to register a planning application under the DL.
- 8.3 The certificate is specific to a single planning application. As such it is best to only pay for the certificate once the planning authority have indicated that planning permission is likely to be granted.

9.0 Summary

- 9.1 In summary:
- (1) The proposals will involve the construction of an orangery 6m x 7m in size. The orangery will be located mainly on a well maintained flagstone patio, and partially on a empty shrub bed, a gravel path and a short cut lawn.
 - (2) These habitats are largely unsuitable for GCN and are separated from the nearest pond (50m away) by a swimming pool, a gravel drive and two large buildings. It is therefore very unlikely that GCN will be found during construction.
 - (3) To further minimise the risk of harm to GCN a simple method statement will be followed which will involve the removal of the patio under an ecological watching brief, storing materials on pallets and covering piles of materials.
 - (4) In the unlikely situation that a GCN is found during works, all works will stop immediately, GS Ecology will be contacted (GCN will be moved to a nearby safe place) and works will not continue until any requisite licence has been obtained from Natural England.
 - (5) Alternatively, to avoid the risk of having to stop works should GCN be found, the site could be registered under the NatureSpace Partnership GCN District Licence (see below) however as the risk of finding GCN is very low this would not be necessary for this planning application.
- 9.2 I trust that the above is clear but please do not hesitate to call or email if you have any questions.
- Yours sincerely,



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Director
GS Ecology LTD