

Date: 1 April 2025
Application: 250722



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 250722

Applicant: Five Horseshoes LLP

Site Address: The Coach House, Five Horseshoes House, White Hill, Remenham Hill, Wokingham, RG9 3EP

Parish: Remenham

Grid Reference: Easting - 477963, Northing - 182855

Type of Development: Minor Dwellings (1-9)

Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling following demolition of the existing Coach House, plus associated landscaping.

Case Officer: James Fuller

Development Management has received the above application and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 250722. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#).

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date or **15 working days** if the development type is classed as a major development.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	NatureSpace District Licensing Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology Newts	App No:	250722
Address:	The Coach House, Five Horseshoes House, White Hill, Remenham Hill, Wokingham, RG9 3EP.		
Proposal:	Full planning application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling following demolition of the existing Coach House, plus associated landscaping.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9)		
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

The application site falls within an amber Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts, indicating an area of suitable habitat and potential great crested newt presence. Four ponds appear on OS mapping within 500m of the application site and three of these contain historic records of great crested newts, including the nearest pond located 60m from the application site. The other ponds are located 200-400m away. There are nearby historic records of great crested newts to the north, west, and south of the application site, and no major barriers to dispersal.

The applicant has supplied an ecological report (Windrush Ecology, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, February 2025). This report has determined that habitats within the site are of negligible value for great crested newts and that the species is therefore likely absent from the site. The report considers that the development will have no impact on great crested newts.

However, the report has not considered the historic records indicating a local population of great crested newts in close proximity to the site (within 60m) or the potential for the site to become more suitable as a result of construction activities. No recent pond surveys have been carried out to confirm or refute the historic records, so a precautionary principle should apply. The assumption should be made that a local population of great crested newts is still present in these nearby ponds. While the site currently offers few opportunities for great crested newts, this could change if the garden is left unmanaged prior to commencement of development, or

as a result of demolition and construction activities. For example, great crested newts could shelter within rubble piles or under building materials, or become trapped in open excavations. They are capable of crossing small areas of unsuitable habitat while traversing the landscape. This could result in individual great crested newts being harmed as a consequence of the development.

These risks are considered to be small and manageable via precautionary methods of working (without the need for a great crested newt licence). Site workers should be made aware of the potential risk and should implement appropriate avoidance measures. Therefore, I recommend that a Great Crested Newt Precautionary Working Methods Statement (GCNPWMS) is produced to safeguard individual great crested newts throughout the development. This should be written by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted to the local planning authority for approval prior to commencement of development.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Great Crested Newt Precautionary Working Methods Statement
Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a Great Crested Newt Precautionary Working Methods Statement (GCNPWMS), which shall detail reasonable avoidance measures to safeguard individual great crested newts from harm during the development. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within the GCNPWMS.

Reason: To minimise the impacts of development on biodiversity, in accordance with Policy CP7 of Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy, Section 15 of the NPPF, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

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 (2023), 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 as 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 Advice note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys (CIEEM, 2019) 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*".

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Date:	15/04/2025	Signed:	NatureSpace
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