

Date: 14 October 2025
Application: 252379



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

P.O. Box 157

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Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Approval of Reserved Matters Consultation

Application Number: 252379

Applicant: E Walton

Site Address: Parcel N, Arborfield Green, Berkshire

Parish: Barkham

Grid Reference: Easting - 477062, Northing - 165394

Type of Development: Major Dwellings (10+)

Proposal: Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 for the erection of 67 dwellings with associated infrastructure, access and landscaping. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.

Case Officer: Adriana González

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 252379. 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 requested from the case officer.

Your observations are required in respect of this application by **11 November 2025**.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	NatureSpace District Licensing Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology Newts	App No:	252379
Address:	Parcel N, Arborfield Green, Berkshire.		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 for the erection of 67 dwellings with associated infrastructure, access and landscaping. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.		
Type of Development:	Major Dwellings (10+)		
Site Visit Made:	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

Comments

The application site falls within an amber impact risk zone for great crested newts, indicating an area of suitable habitat with potential presence and risk of adverse impacts of development. There are several ponds within the surrounding area, including balancing ponds adjacent to the application site southern boundary, and wet ditches, including along the northern boundary. There is a recent (2020) record of great crested newts approximately 380m east of the application site.

The applicant has supplied a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP; ACD Environmental, dated 24/09/2025) and Ecological Permeability Report: Biodiversity Action Plan (ACD Environmental, dated 24/09/2025). These reports describe the application site as comprising highly suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested newts, being tussocky grassland with a sward height of 30-40cm and frequent ant hills, indicating a lack of management for a number of years. Additionally, the eastern section of the site had vegetation indicative of prevailing wet ground conditions, further increasing suitability for amphibians.

Both reports state the following: *"The six ponds located off site had the potential to support great crested newt Triturus cristatus but the eDNA results issued in May 2025 confirmed their likely absence. The grassland on site is suitable for this species in its terrestrial life phase but none were recorded."*

A comment on the application submitted by residents of 3 Stephenson Road on 15/10/2025 states: *"In addition to the environmental survey not having found traces of great crested newts in the ponds, we do have them in our gardens, migrating in from the deep wet ditch that runs just behind the gardens."*

There are no verified records of great crested newt along Stephenson Road, but the wet ditch is understood to be that visible on OS mapping along the northern boundary of the application site. It is not clear whether this ditch has been subject to survey for great crested newt. The LEMP does not describe a wet ditch in this area, a line of trees and area of dense scrub with frequent mare's tail (a wet ground indicator) is described.

Further information request

A report detailing the methods and results of the 2025 great crested newt eDNA surveys, including a map depicting the waterbodies surveyed, should be provided. If any waterbodies were inaccessible or were scoped out of requiring further survey (e.g. due to being dry), this information should be included.

Further information on the wet ditch along the northern boundary of the application site, to the rear of the properties on Stephenson Road, should be provided. This ditch should be assessed for its suitability to support breeding great crested newts. If suitable, surveys to determine the presence or likely absence of the species should be undertaken.

Alternatively, the applicant has the option of joining Wokingham Borough Council's District Licence Scheme for great crested newts. Authorisation under the district licence would ensure the proposed development is fully compliant with the relevant legislation and planning policy, and that potential negative impacts of the development on great crested newts are dealt with appropriately. If the applicant wishes to pursue the district licence, an enquiry must be made with NatureSpace and the applicant must submit a NatureSpace report in support of the planning application prior to determination. The NatureSpace report confirms the development can be covered by the district licence and includes the planning conditions necessary for use of the licence.

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, surveys should be updated or written justification of their continued validity will be required; and anything more than 3 years old "*is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated*".

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	03/11/2025	Signed:	NatureSpace
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