

Great Crested Newt Statement

Recipients: [REDACTED] Petter

Site: 74 Waterloo Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2JF

Date: 22/05/25

Author: Jonathan Stuttard BSc (Hons) MSc, Technical Manager of Ecology, Arbtech Consulting Ltd.

1. Introduction

Arbtech Consulting Ltd. were commissioned by [REDACTED] Petter to produce a Great Crested Newt (GCN) Statement in support of a planning application pertaining to 74 Waterloo Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2JF (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). Proposals for the site comprise a two-storey side extension, a first-floor extension over the existing garage, and changing of the dormers. A proposed development plan is provided in **Appendix 1**.

The site is located at National Grid Reference SU82585 68339 and has an area under 0.1ha. The site is characterised by a detached residential dwelling and enclosing vegetated garden and driveway. The site is located within a suburban context east of Wokingham Town Centre and is enclosed by dense residential development on all aspects. A site location plan is provided in **Appendix 2**.

Following the initial submission of the planning application, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) have made the following request:

"The site is located with a red or amber risk zone modelled for the protected species 'Great Crested Newt' as identified on the Wokingham Planning Constraints map. It is important that the local planning authority considers the potential risk to this species as a result of the proposal. Please supply a site specific 'Great Crested Newt Statement' to consider this risk and whether mitigation measures or a protected species licence would be required. It may help to seek specialist advice through an Ecological Consultant."

The scope of this GCN Statement is to appraise the value of the site to support GCN, assess the associated risk posed by the proposed development, and outline any necessary mitigation measures required to ensure compliance with legislation and Planning Policy.

2. Methodology

A desk-based assessment has been undertaken to inform this GCN Statement. The desk-based assessment comprised a review of Aerial Imagery available on Google Earth¹ and data available on mapping provided on the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)². Furthermore, whilst a site visit specific to this assessment was not undertaken, site detail was available via photographs and other survey information

¹ <https://earth.google.com/web/>

² <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

collected during a Preliminary Roost Assessment completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. in July 2024.

Information collated was used to determine the presence of waterbodies that could support breeding GCN with functional connectivity to the site; the value of on-site habitats to support GCN; and to make an overall assessment of the likelihood of GCN presence within the site and the associated impact of the proposed development.

3. GCN Site Assessment

Value of the Site to Support GCN

A review of the MAGIC database shows an absence of records indicating the presence of GCN within 500m of the site. GCN exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds/ waterbodies and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; GCN are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding sites (Langton et al. 2001)³. The nearest record indicating the presence of GCN relates to a positive eDNA survey result from 2017, located 710m southwest. This record is not assessed to have functional connectivity to the site due to being over 500m away.

A review of aerial imagery and the MAGIC database indicates the presence of three ponds within 500m of the site, located 136m southwest (P1), 220m east (P2), and 285m southeast (P3). Furthermore, there are multiple ditches that could be wet during the GCN breeding period between March and June that may enhance landscape value for GCN. The location of ponds and ditches within 500m are shown on the plan in **Appendix 3**. Whilst these waterbodies are within the commutable range of the site for GCN, no water bodies within 500m are assessed to have functional connectivity to the site. This is due to separation between all waterbodies and the site by urban landscape features, which combined are assessed to represent a significant barrier to dispersal. Specifically, all waterbodies are separated by dense residential infrastructure, comprising a combination of tarmac roads with vertical curbs, residential buildings and enclosing driveways, and numerous residential fences. Connectivity is therefore assessed to be highly limited.

Whilst there are no waterbodies on site, habitats present are considered suitable to support terrestrial GCN, albeit limited. The vegetated garden on site contains mature trees, introduced shrubs, and modified grassland. Although the grassland is retained to a short sward and thus lacks any refuge value, the mature trees and shrubs on the garden border provide suitable refuge, foraging, and commuting value. However, considering the poor landscape connectivity between the site and water bodies in the wider landscape, the likelihood of GCN presence on site is considered to be low.

Impact Assessment

Proposals for the site comprise a two-storey side extension, a first-floor extension over the existing garage, and changing of the dormers. The first-floor extension and changing of the dormers will have no ground level impacts to vegetation and thus no impacts to GCN associated with these proposals are anticipated. Whilst the two-storey side extension will encroach into the existing vegetated garden, the area of impact will be small. Considering this and the low likelihood of GCN presence on site, the risk of impacting GCN and any subsequent breaches of planning policy and legislation is considered highly unlikely.

³ Langton *et al.* (2001). The Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook. <https://cieem.net/resource/great-crested-newt-conservation-handbook/>

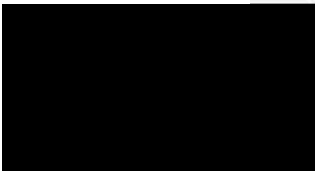
4. Recommendations

Due to the assessed low likelihood of GCN presence and the limited scale of the proposed development, the risk of impacting GCN and any subsequent breaches of planning policy and legislation is considered highly unlikely. **As such, no further surveys are considered necessary to inform the planning application and the development will not require a derogation licence to lawfully proceed.**

However, as a matter of best practice, it is recommended that the following precautionary working methods are applied to the site to further reduce the potential for impacts. These mitigation prescriptions will also ensure protection of other common amphibians such as common toads, which represent a species of principal importance listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act⁴.

1. Existing grassland management to retain a short sward will be maintained to prevent the grassland developing a more diverse sward of elevated value to amphibians, which may in turn encourage amphibians to the development area.
2. Should a GCN be encountered during the works, all works must stop immediately, and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for advice on how to lawfully proceed. Any other common amphibians encountered can be moved from the development area carefully by gloved hand (nitrile gloves) and placed into an area of shrubs at the garden peripheries. Guidance on amphibian identification can be accessed freely via the ARG UK amphibian ID Guide⁵. For the avoidance of doubt, a suitably qualified ecologist could also be contacted to confirm species identification.

I trust this GCN Statement satisfies the LPA's duty to consider GCN whilst reviewing the planning application. Should there be any queries regarding this document, please feel free to make direct contact as per the below contact details.



Author

Jonathan Stuttard BSc (Hons) MSc – Technical Manager of Ecology.
Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence - 2015-19037-CLS-CLS
Arbtech Consulting Ltd
Jonathanstuttard@arbtech.co.uk

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

⁵ <https://www.arguk.org/downloads-in-pages/resources/id-guides>

Appendix 1 – Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2 – Site Location Plan



Appendix 3 – Site and Pond Plan



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