



Bearwood Road, Wokingham

Species Protection Plan (SPP) for Great Crested Newts

For Artel 31

28th January 2026

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Version

VERSION	DATE	AUTHOR	REVIEWED	APPROVED
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The report, and the information contained in it, is intended to be valid for a maximum of 12 months from the date of the survey, providing no significant alterations to the site have occurred.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Commission

Ellendale Environmental Limited was commissioned by Artel 31 to provide a Species Protection Plan (SPP) for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) to ensure all reasonable protection measures are undertaken with regards to the protection of GCN at Bearwood Road, Barkham, Winnersh, RG41 4SG ('the site'). The site will be redeveloped to provide two new residential properties ('the development').

This SPP has been written to satisfy condition 30 of the Appeal Decision (Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/25/3363174) which states;

30] The appeal site has been assessed as being a suitable habitat with a high likelihood of great crested newts being present. As these are a protected species, it is necessary to impose a condition requiring a precautionary working method statement to be submitted and approved. In the interests of the visual amenity of the appeal site, it is necessary to impose a condition which requires the removal of waste material and debris following demolition of the existing buildings.

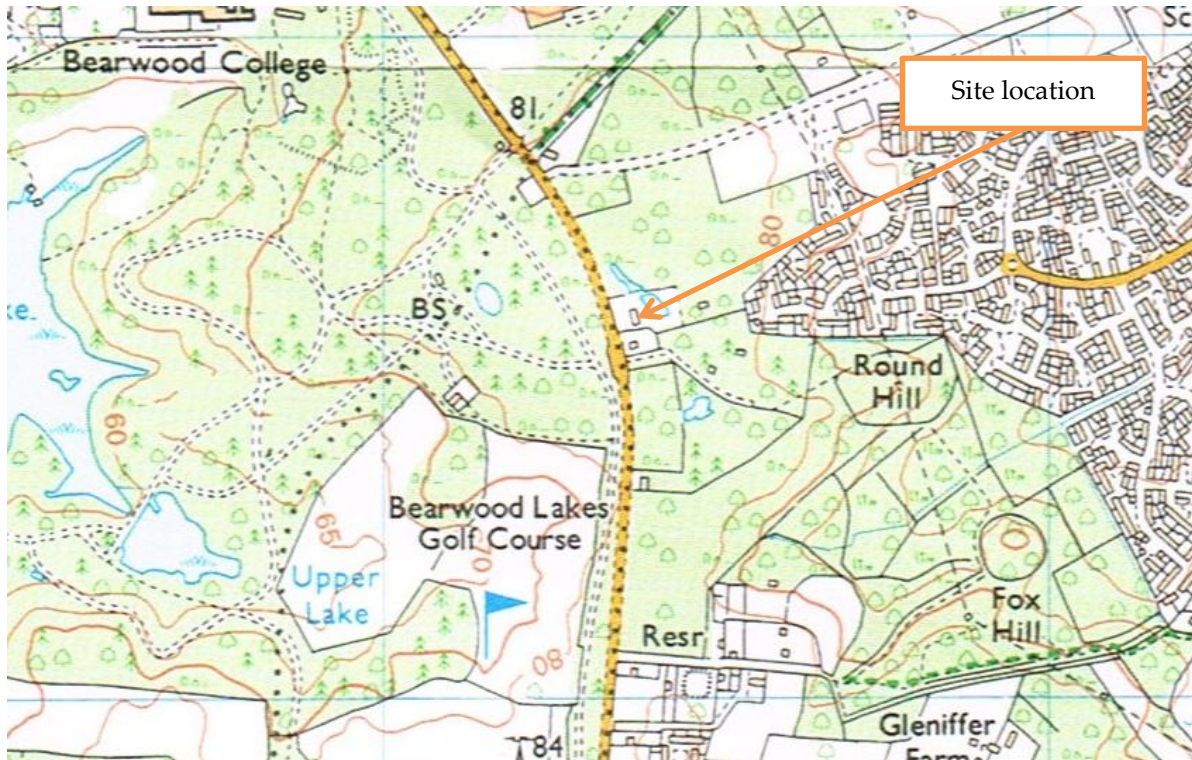
1.2 Project Location & Description

The site is located on Bearwood Road in Barkham, a village and civil parish in the borough of Wokingham in Berkshire, approximately two miles south-west of the town of Wokingham, at OS grid reference SU 78394 68606.

The site comprises two residential properties and a garage. It is approximately 0.7 hectares in size, with an area of amenity grassland, two ponds formed from former gravel excavations, broad-leaved woodland and amenity planting/introduced shrub. To the north and east there are areas of broad-leaved woodland and dense rhododendron. To the south there is a residential property and to the west there is Bearwood Road, beyond which are residential properties.



Figure 1: Site location



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Two ponds are present with the site in former gravel workings and are separated by a path. 'Pond 1' is located to the north of the site and is approximately 0.06ha in size. It is approximately 1.5m deep with steep-sided banks and, at the time of a survey undertaken by Ellendale Environmental in September 2023¹, was dry with a small area of water present to the south-east. Vegetation was limited around the pond and some roots were noted where vegetation had been cut back from the banks of the pond.

¹EEL535R2311135SP 178 Bearwood Road Wokingham Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) CIC v1.0.



Photograph 1: showing a view of Pond 1



'Pond 2' is located to the south of the site and is approximately 0.085ha in size. The banks of the pond have been previously managed with a wall and walkway present around the entire pond boundary that means it retains water throughout the year and was not dry.



Photograph 2: showing a view of Pond 2



Broad-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton natans* and white water lily *Nymphaea alba* are present within the pond and scattered pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and soft rush *Juncus effusus* was present around the boundaries; however, this was limited, as much of the adjacent habitat is managed as amenity grassland.

The grassland present within the site is heavily managed with a low sward height which reduces the suitability for GCN to be present and no evidence was found during the survey. The dense scrub within the site may provide some foraging and commuting habitat for the species; however, no evidence was found.



Fish and waterfowl were noted to be present on Pond 2 which reduces the suitability of the ponds to provide habitat for amphibian species, as the eggs, larvae and adults will be predated upon.

Pond 1 was noted to be dry during the survey and is understood to be dry throughout much of the summer months, thus also reducing the suitability to support GCN. Furthermore, there is a lack of suitable matinal vegetation required by GCN and a lack of suitable egg laying plants.

There is therefore a low likelihood of GCN being encountered within the working area for the development, and it is proposed that no further surveys are required. Furthermore, a Natural England licence would not be required in support of the works.

1.3 Purpose of the Species Protection Plan

Notwithstanding the above, this SPP provides guidance and agreed procedures for the protection of GCN during the works, in the unlikely event that they are encountered within the site.

The emphasis throughout is on pragmatic measures that nonetheless take full account of the legal and conservation status of GCN, providing guidance and agreed procedures for the protection of GCN and suitable terrestrial habitat during the works at the site. The SPP details the procedures that must be followed where there is potential for GCN to be present.

Efforts to avoid or minimise disturbance should be proportionate to the status of the species, with special attention paid to the rarest and most susceptible or those with special protection. The best way to avoid disturbance is by good forward planning. It is important to be able to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to avoid damage or disturbance and to comply with legislation and guidance.



2. Legislation and Ecology

2.1 Legislation

Five species of amphibian are widespread in England; common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus* and GCN. A sixth species of amphibian, the natterjack toad *Bufo calamita*, also occurs in England but this species has special habitat requirements that limits its range to certain sand dune and heathland sites that are not present on the site.

Amphibians require aquatic habitat within which to breed and suitable terrestrial habitat to forage and hibernate. Suitable breeding waterbodies are usually well vegetated with still, shallow water which is not heavily shaded or very exposed. Terrestrial habitat includes woodland, scrub, field edges and gardens. Hibernation can occur under stone or log piles, in crevices or leaf litter and under the soil. Occasionally amphibians may be found hibernating in their breeding pools.

Over the last few decades all amphibians have suffered a decline in numbers. This is due to a combination of many factors, which include habitat destruction and fragmentation, loss of breeding pools through unsympathetic management and neglect, introduction of fish (which eat amphibian larvae) and pollution.

The GCN is a European Protected Species (EPS) protected under the 2017 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, which implements the EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom. In relation to an EPS, the 2017 regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of an EPS;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in particular any disturbance which is likely to: (i) impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate; (ii) affect



significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal; and/or
- To (a) be in possession of, or to control; (b) to transport any live or dead animal or any part of an animal; (c) to sell or exchange or (d) offer for sale or exchange any live or dead animal or part of an animal of an EPS.

In addition, GCNs are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended). The GCN is listed on Schedule 5 of the Act and is subject to the provisions of Sections 9.4b and 9.4c, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; and/or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a GCN.

Where works are planned that may result in an offence under the current legislation then works should be carried out under an appropriate licence from Natural England.

The GCN, natterjack toad and common toad are also listed as priority species for conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.



3. Impact of Development

3.1 Overview

There is a low likelihood of GCN being encountered within the working area for the development, and a Natural England licence would not be required in support of the works. Notwithstanding this, this SPP provides guidance and agreed procedures for the protection of GCN during the works, in the unlikely event that they are encountered within the site.

The potential impacts are considered in more detail below, in relation to the ecology and status of GCN and their shelters, and where necessary, mitigation proposals and best practice measures have been detailed in order to safeguard GCN (again in the unlikely event that they are encountered during the works).

3.2 Key Considerations

The potential impacts arising on GCN can be broken down into a number of key aspects, which reflect GCN ecology. These are:

- Potential for direct disturbance to GCN and terrestrial habitat/place of shelter or breeding ponds/waterbodies;
- Potential for indirect disturbance to GCN and terrestrial habitat/place of shelter or breeding ponds/waterbodies;
- Maintenance of links with other terrestrial habitat/place of shelter or breeding ponds/waterbodies;
- Potential for loss of foraging grounds;
- Construction considerations; and
- Check surveys.



Potential for direct disturbance to GCN and terrestrial habitat/place of shelter or breeding ponds/waterbodies

GCN are well known to be relatively tolerant of indirect disturbance such as noise; however, they are less tolerant of direct disturbance such as physical interference and light.

The ponds present within the area of amenity grassland will be maintained in their current location during the works and will not be directly impacted. The habitat surrounding the ponds will continue to be managed through mowing making it unsuitable for GCN.

Potential for indirect disturbance to GCN and terrestrial habitat/place of shelter or breeding ponds/waterbodies

There is potential for indirect disturbance to the existing ponds through noise and lighting within the site during the works. Best practice mitigation for the works is discussed in Section 4.

Maintenance of links with other existing terrestrial habitat/place of shelter or breeding ponds/waterbodies

There is no potential for the works to damage links between foraging and commuting habitat and shelters out with the site boundaries.

Potential for loss of terrestrial habitat/place of shelter

There will no loss of foraging grounds for GCN and no detrimental effects are anticipated.



Construction considerations

During the construction phase of any development, it is often necessary to undertake a number of additional measures to safeguard any GCN present on a site, particularly in regard to disturbance and other related issues. Best practice mitigation for the works is discussed in Section 4.

Check surveys

GCN are a dynamic species and are also highly mobile and readily move between sites. An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be available to visit the site throughout the works to undertake surveys and inspections of the site and adjacent habitats as required. The results of these surveys will be given to the project team on site immediately following the surveys/inspections.



4. Mitigation Measures

4.1 Mitigation

- Site personnel are to be made aware of the potential presence of GCN through a toolbox talk (**Appendix A**);
- Site personnel will be inducted to the environmental constraints of the site;
- A suitably experienced ecologist/ECOW will be available to attend site on a regular basis throughout the works to ensure all environmental mitigation relevant to GCN is delivered;
- Any temporarily exposed pipes or similar will be capped when staff are off site to prevent mammals from gaining access and becoming trapped;
- Habitat management and manipulation (**Section 4.2**) should be implemented to ensure the area is unsuitable for terrestrial amphibians;
- Felled trees and shrubs should be chipped and mulched so as to not create habitat for amphibians;
- Any trenches or excavations on site should have a plank placed within them overnight at an angle of no greater than 45 degrees, to ensure that trapped animals have a means of safe egress;
- Water will be prevented from pooling on the site (i.e., in tyre ruts, etc.) through the use of drains and/or pumps as appropriate to prevent amphibians from colonising ephemeral pools;
- No materials are to be stored directly on the ground. Storage should be raised off the ground to prevent amphibians from crawling underneath for shelter. Pallets or racking should be used;
- If bulk sand and/or ballast are to be stored on site, it should be stored off the ground as specified in suitable one tonne storage bags on pallets or stored directly on the ground within areas enclosed by amphibian proof fencing. Amphibians and other animals will quickly colonise rubble/aggregate or sand piles as suitable areas for hibernation;



- An emergency procedure will be implemented by site workers if an GCN are unexpectedly encountered. All work will cease until a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist has inspected the site and determined the appropriate course of action; and
- Should GCN be identified within an area works will be halted within the area whilst mitigation is determined (under consultation with Natural England if required).

4.2 Habitat Management and Manipulation

- Vegetation within areas of suitable terrestrial habitat located within the area of works should be cleared using hand-held machinery to a height of no less than 100mm to reduce suitability of the habitat and to encourage the dispersal of any animals away from affected areas;
- Vegetation should be cut using hand-held tools (and under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist if required, who could inspect affected areas prior to and during works);
- In addition, any refuge opportunities present should be dismantled by hand and searched prior to being removed; and
- Vegetation removal works should be carried out at a time of year when amphibians are active (generally March to October inclusive), ideally during the newt breeding season (mid-March to mid-June inclusive) when newts are even less likely to be present at the site.



Appendix A – Toolbox Talk for GCN



GREAT CRESTED NEWT AND COMMON AMPHIBIANS

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and common amphibians are widely distributed throughout the UK and are found in a wide variety of habitats. Great crested newts (GCN) are the largest of the UK's three native species. Newts along with Common Frog and Toad use both terrestrial and aquatic habitats returning to water during April/May when breeding takes place.



Characteristic crest on the back of the male during the breeding season

Males have a silver-grey stripe that runs along the tail



Distinctive yellow-orange stripe along the lower edge of the tail on the female

Dark grey-brown backs and flanks, appear black

Identification

- Dark grey-brown backs and flanks, and are covered with darker coloured spots so that they appear almost black in colour.
- Their undersides are either yellow or orange-coloured and are covered in large black blotches.
- Males have a jagged crest during the breeding season with a marked break in the dorsal crest.

- Males also have a silver-grey stripe that runs along the tail.
- Females lack a crest, but have a yellow-orange stripe along the lower edge of their tail and often a marked orange stripe along the top of the lower back and tail.

Great Crested Newts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Directive (2017) a piece of EU legislation that has been retained in UK law and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or take (capture) GCN, Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a GCN (aquatic and terrestrial habitat) or Intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose

Common/ Smooth Newt (*Triturus vulgaris*)



Identification

- Females and non-breeding males are pale brown or olive green, often with two darker stripes on the back.
- Both sexes have an orange belly, although it is paler in females, which is covered in rounded black spots.
- They have a pale throat with conspicuous spots.
- During the breeding season the male is far darker than the female, with a tall wavy and transparent crest along the spine and tail, with dark spots covering the rest of the body.

Palmate Newt (*Triturus helveticus*)



Identification

- Both sexes are olive-green/brown; a dark line runs across the head through the eyes.
- Females may have dark stripes on their flanks and down the middle of their backs. Sometimes females also have light-coloured stripes, or dark and light spots along the sides of their backs
- Does not have the spotted throat of the smooth newt.
- Both sexes have a yellow or pale orange belly with some spotting

Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*)



Identification

- Adults have a body length of 6 to 9 centimetres (2.4 to 3.5 in).
- Flanks, limbs and backs are covered with irregular dark blotches.
- The frogs' underbellies are white or yellow (occasionally more orange in females)
- Relatively short hind legs and possess webbed feet.
- During the mating season, males are generally light and greyish in colour, whereas the female is browner, or even red.

Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*)



Identification

- The common toad can reach about 15 cm (6 in) in length.
- Females are normally stouter than males.
- Eyes have yellow or copper coloured irises and horizontal slit-shaped pupils.
- Short hind legs and long unwebbed toes.
- Skin is dry and covered with small wart-like lumps.
- Colour is a fairly uniform shade of brown, olive-brown or greyish-brown.

Common and Palmate Newt, Common Frog and Toad are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to deliberately kill, harm or injure them, sell or trade them in any way.