



Landscape, Arboriculture and Ecology

Surveys – Plans – Assessments - Mitigation – Solutions – Methodology

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Precautionary Working Method Statement

Wickenden Farm

Chilling Street

Sharpthorne

East Sussex

RH19 4JD

Ms Penny Jerram

Wickenden Farm

Chilling Street

Sharpthorne

East Sussex

RH19 4JD

Arborweald Environmental Planning Consultancy

Woodland Enterprise Centre

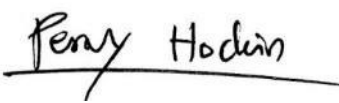
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Document information

Report title:	DKS/1283.6 Precautionary Working Method Statement
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Report date:	13 th October 2025
Declaration: The information which I have prepared and provided for this report is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct; I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional bona fide opinions.	
Printed: Perry Hockin BSc (Hons.), FDSoc, ACIEEM – Principal Ecologist	
Signed: 	

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No investigative method can completely eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise or incomplete information. Thus, we cannot guarantee that the investigations completely defined the degree or extent of species abundances or habitat management efficacy described in the report.

The material presented in this report is confidential. This report has been prepared for the exclusive use of the client and shall not be distributed or made available to any other company or person without the knowledge and written consent of the author. Notwithstanding confidentiality, this document may be utilised and publicly displayed with reference to the development proposal planning application.

This report and all survey work have been prepared to British Standard 42020 and rely on information and methodology from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management.

Additionally, this report relies on information from other third parties, some of which may include, but not be limited to; DEFRA's MAGIC database, local record centres, local wildlife spotter groups such as badger groups, and the NBN atlas.

Introduction

Arborweald Environmental Planning Consultancy (AEPC) were commissioned by Ms Penny Jerram to produce a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* to aid the application for redevelopment of Wickenden Farm, Sharpthorne, RH19 4JD.

A detailed Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Biodiversity Metric Assessment (BMA) was produced in June 2024. In summary, the PEA concluded that:

- There are six (6) waterbodies within 250m of the site boundary
- Four (4) of these waterbodies are considered unsuitable to support great crested newts on account of their large populations of carp
- The remaining two (2) waterbodies are considered to have some potential to support great crested newts but are spatially distant from the site with habitat of sub-optimal suitability forming a minor barrier to their dispersal towards the development site.
- It was concluded that as such, newt presence in the works area would be extremely unlikely.

Despite these results indicating that newts are likely absent from the local area, there is a low risk of encountering newts during their terrestrial stage. As such, a Precautionary Working Method Statement is necessary to ensure an offence is not committed.

This document refers to multiple other documents, including:

- Land at Wickenden Farm PEA_issue2

Background

Great crested newts

Great crested newts are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is a criminal offence to intentionally or accidentally harm, injure or destroy great crested newts or their eggs. Planning permission for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation.

Necessity

The necessity for a precautionary method statement is specified in the updated response from Essex Ecological Advice Service (EEAS). This PWMS is designed to be used by contractors and other parties on site to inform them of their duties regarding great crested newts.

Condition 8 wording reads:

No development above ground floor slab level shall commence until a Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS) for Great Crested Newts, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the proposals avoid adverse impacts on Great Crested Newts, in accordance with DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

No exact content requirement has been supplied at this stage, therefore, this statement has been written to comply with the following standardised PWMS content:

- a) *purpose and objectives for the proposed works.*
- b) *detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including, where relevant, type and source of materials to be used).*
- c) *extent and location of proposed works.*
- d) *timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction.*
- e) *persons responsible for implementing the works.*
- f) *initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).*
- g) *disposal of any wastes arising from the works.*

Evaluation methodology

The following risk assessment criteria are considered:

Likelihood of presence

Whether, given the site suitability, the species is likely to be present on site. This is decided by assessing the following elements:

- Direct evidence of that species, such as anecdotal or direct sightings
- Surrounding habitat – Where is the site positioned? Is it a suitable area such that a source population would utilise the site?

- Regardless of its suitability, can the species access the site, and if so, how easily?
- Does the site provide enough foraging opportunities to independently support the species, or would it only form part of a wider foraging territory?
- If on site, is the species likely to be predated upon, or is there significant cover?
- Are the right breeding or hibernation opportunities available on site or in the Zone of Influence (ZOI)?

The following categories are used:

- **High** – the species has a good local population, can access the site, and would thrive on site. Potential direct evidence.
- **Moderate** – the species is present in the wider landscape and would utilise the site, possibly as a part of a wider territory. Access may be restricted, or habitats may be sub-optimal in some way. No direct evidence.
- **Low** – the species is unlikely to be on site due to a lack of suitable habitat, poor access, or absence from the wider landscape – either demonstrable, or likely absent due to surrounding habitat unsuitability.

Necessity of actions

In this context, this refers to whether these actions / activities are required as a part of the development. They have already been deemed necessary to facilitate development under the NPPF mitigation hierarchy, and avoidance measures have already been tested.

Likelihood of species being affected

If present, would this species be affected by the proposed activity. This takes account of the likely population of the species, the scale of the activity, and the effect of any mitigation measures. The following categories are used:

- Very likely – where an impact is almost guaranteed
- Likely – where an impact is predicted due to the size of the species population or the scale of the activity
- Possible – where an impact could occur if the species is present
- Unlikely – species population is low enough, or scope of the activity is minimal
- Discounted – where an impact can almost be guaranteed not to occur subject to mitigation measures as this species is not present, or the activity is not a part of the proposals.

Recommendations

Recommendations are expanded upon in Section 6; in section 4, the scale of mitigation is discussed and broken down into the following categories:

- Special mitigation will be required, such as additional surveys, special control measures, or changes to the design to mitigate otherwise unacceptable impacts, as outlined in Section 6.
- The species does not pose a constraint subject to the application of 'Standard mitigation' measures as outlined in Section 6. No special mitigation required.
- Whilst there is no guarantee, the surveyor has used the evidence gathered to confirm likely absence of this species, and no specific mitigation will be required. No further action will be required for this species, and it will not be individually covered in Section 6. These species are still protected, and any changes to their status may result in mitigation being required.

Risk assessment

Current usage

Breeding

No signs of great crested newts were recorded during the PEA survey, and there is no breeding habitat on the development site.

Waterbodies 1-4 were scoped out as they are carp reservoirs that are fully stocked, and as such lack the plant life required to support breeding newts that would be at high risk of predation. Waterbodies 5 and 6 were scoped out at the PEA stage by The Ecology Partnership as they are surrounded by habitat of much better suitability for newts during their terrestrial life stage compared with the habitat between them and the site which comprises short sward grassland, arable and hardstanding.

As such, the likelihood of a meta-population being present within the wider landscape is considered to be low as whilst there are waterbodies within 250m of the site boundary, they have either been proven to be relatively disconnected from the site, or unsuitable for breeding newts.

Other presence

Terrestrial usage of the site is considered to be unlikely as the site presents sub-optimal habitat in the context of a wider landscape of better opportunities, as it is regularly mown to a short sward height. There are few hiding places in the development area, and no hibernation opportunities.

Likelihood of great crested newt presence	LOW
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In accordance with CIEEM guidance and JNCC Phase 1 methodology, this meets the threshold for a precautionary approach without the need for further Phase 2 herptile survey effort.

Impact risk assessment

Great crested newts are typically most vulnerable to the following activities:

- Habitat loss, especially removal of dense vegetation, particularly tussocky grass and scrub.
- Clearance of hibernation features such as log / brash piles, as well as man-made features such as construction debris
- Removal of trees and hedgerows with roots suitable for hibernation
- Turf stripping
- Works to existing waterbodies

Activity	Necessary on site?	Great crested newts likely to be affected?	Recommendations
Habitat loss	Yes	Unlikely	Precautionary Watching Brief (PWB), seasonal avoidance measures and vegetation clearance methodology
Hibernation feature removal	Yes	Unlikely	Removal of what few hibernation features are present in active season
Tree / hedge removal	Yes	Unlikely	PWB, seasonal avoidance
Turf stripping	Yes	Unlikely	PWB, seasonal avoidance
Works to waterbodies	No	Discounted	No waterbodies on site

Herptile season

Hibernation season for herptiles comprises the coldest and darkest months in which they enter a state of torpor due to the lack of sunlight hours and opportunities to warm themselves and become active. Whilst there is no specific definition of the months that herptiles hibernate due to climatic variability and species differences, it is generally accepted that herptiles are hibernating In November, December, January and February, with some limited activity in October and March, increasing as daytime temperatures increase.

Active season comprises the warmest months of the year, and are generally accepted to be April, May, June, July, August, and September, with some activity expected in warmer periods of March and October. Additional consideration should be given to amphibian **breeding season** which occurs in the period March to June inclusive subject to weather conditions.

Capture and translocation of herptiles

Species identification

Identification of the target species for translocation is extremely important so as to manage risks to both the captor and the target individual.

Can be captured and translocated	Must not be captured	Reason
Common frog	Great crested newt	Protected species
Common toad		
Smooth newt		
Palmate newt		

If in doubt regarding the species, stop works and contact an appropriately trained, experienced and where necessary licenced ecologist.

General notes

Mitigation measures for amphibians such as great crested newts and common toads are similar to those for reptiles such as common lizards and slow worms. Where they differ is in their speed of movement, and their level of protection, as well as some differences in habitat.

Broadly all species are found within similar dense habitats such as tussocky grass, scrub, and occasionally woodland, making use of dense woody features for cover. Amphibians are more often found near water, although newts are broadly terrestrial having only a brief aquatic period in March to June.

When organising mitigation, there are a few salient points to remember:

- Capturing or excluding a great crested newt without a licence is an offence, *unless rescuing the newt was an emergency measure that would otherwise negate the risk of a more serious offence being committed*. This includes restricting newts to a fenced area.
- All herptiles hibernate in the same sorts of habitats, being natural log and brash piles, holes in the ground, and man-made features such as construction waste and bonfires.
- All herptiles hibernate at roughly the same time (the winter months) and are active in the warmer months.
- Reptiles broadly move faster than amphibians and are more capable of fleeing activities such as vegetation clearance. As such, amphibians are most vulnerable to destructive activities, which must be carefully planned to be undertaken slowly and methodically to allow their natural escape from the working area.

Precautionary Working Method Statement

Due to the methods that will be employed to dig the new fish reservoirs and construct bunding as appropriate, it will be necessary for the works to be mitigated through seasonal avoidance measures and a precautionary approach.

The precautionary approach laid out below should be followed to ensure that in the event that vagrant amphibians are discovered appropriate mitigation measures are put in place to avoid the risk of an offence being committed, and so that construction workers are aware of the constraints that reptile species could present to the development.

The following criteria are covered in this section:

- a) purpose and objectives for the proposed works.
- b) detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including, where relevant, type and source of materials to be used).
- d) timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction.

At a glance:

- Assessment of the working area by a qualified and experienced ecologist
- Toolbox talk to inform operatives
- Fence installation as necessary
- Formal translocation effort if required
- Seasonal constraints applied as necessary
- Timed vegetation clearance with encouragement / informal translocation of stragglers towards safe habitat outside of working area
- Maintenance of site
- Works commence under precautionary approach once site has been made safe for reptiles

The term 'informal translocation' refers solely to **manual encouragement of non-licensable species** from the work area and does not imply or condone handling of licensable species unless authorised under licence.

Toolbox talk

Prior to works commencing, a toolbox talk will be presented to all operatives to inform them of the following:

- The legislation protecting amphibian species, particularly great crested newts
- The importance of their conservation
- How to identify them so as to prevent injury
- The site-specific risks to them
- What to do in the event an amphibian is discovered or suspected
- Who to contact in the event an amphibian is discovered
- How to identify areas with amphibians, including signage provisions
- Logging of amphibian incidents

Fencing

No exclusion fencing will be installed unless a European Protected Species licence has been granted by Natural England. This is to avoid the risk of unlawfully trapping or excluding GCN. Short sections of drift fencing may be used temporarily to guide animals away during vegetation clearance, but not for exclusion.

To fulfil the following criteria:

- c) Extent and location of proposed works

Translocation

Under the current scheme, amphibians will be encouraged to disperse from the site naturally through phased vegetation removal. Active translocation will only be carried out for species not subject to licensing constraints from the 'Can be captured' table above.

If there is any doubt as to the species present, works must cease and an appropriately trained and licenced ecologist contacted, as capturing a great crested newt would constitute an offence. Natural England would likely need to be consulted for establishment of an emergency licence in this case.

Timing of works

At a glance

- All works under ecological supervision
- Construct a compensatory feature for displaced herptiles
- Cut vegetation to ground level during the active season
- Maintain at this level until winter / until supervision is available
- Strip turf and topsoil during winter / under ecological supervision

Prior to works commencing

A hibernaculum or log pile should be constructed within the habitat unaffected by the development / offsite to provide a translocation receptor site should herptiles be discovered.

Vegetation removal

Vegetation removal should occur during the active season of March to October, to include phased cutting of all vegetation to ground level.

The entire working area should be checked by the ecologist prior to works commencing, including a hand search where necessary of any dense refugia.

Vegetation cutting works should be undertaken in a staged manner consisting of cut and collect to 150mm, left for 24 hours, then final cut and collect to ground level. This will also reduce the risk to breeding birds.

Hibernacula removal

Any hibernation features such as rubble or spoil piles, bonfires, or dense refugia such as log or brash piles should be slowly dismantled by hand during the active season of March to October only.

Maintenance of the site

Once any areas of vegetation to be affected by the development have been cut to ground level, it should be maintained as such until work operations can begin so as to keep the site as unsuitable for habitation by herptiles as possible.

The site should be cut every two weeks to discourage re-colonisation. All materials or spoil should be kept off the ground to prevent usage as hibernacula or cover.

To fulfil the following criteria:

- f) initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

Turf stripping and excavation

Prior to turf stripping (no more than 5 days before work start), a site walkover should be undertaken to ensure no new refugia have formed.

Turf stripping must only be undertaken once all herptiles have either been excluded from the works area (in the case of fully fenced sites), or once herptiles have been encouraged away from the site through phased vegetation clearance and the site has been maintained at ground level until turf stripping can begin.

Turf stripping during the hibernation season of November to February is only possible if the site has been maintained at ground level, and no hibernation features will be affected – this is at the sole discretion of the ecologist. If this cannot be guaranteed, turf stripping works must occur under ecological supervision during the active season.

In the unlikely event that herptiles are found at any time during the development, work should cease immediately, and an ecologist – suitably licenced where necessary - should be sought. Thereafter works can only recommence upon working in accordance with legislatively compliant recommendations. Failure to do so constitutes a criminal offence.

Additional recommendations

Emergency protocol

In the event that protected species are discovered or suspected on site, works must cease.

1. Operatives are to inform their colleagues of the presence of protected species, their location, what species is suspected, and to **cease works**
2. Inform the site manager that protected species have been found or are suspected
3. Contact the site ecologist who will impose an appropriate cordon around the area of concern, and inform all operatives of the location, scope, and size of the cordon.
4. Where necessary, a licenced ecologist will be contacted
5. Where necessary, Natural England will be contacted

6. For licensable species, an emergency European Protected Species Mitigation licence will be issued.

Works cannot re-commence in the affected area until presence has been confirmed, the species has been identified, and appropriate additional mitigation – including licencing where necessary – has been implemented.

Construction Exclusion Zone (CEZ)

A construction exclusion zone should be established to cover the areas of habitat that will not be affected by the proposed development. These areas should be fenced off with Heras fencing to limit damage to these areas during development; this accords with section 10.9 of BS:42020 (2013). Refer to section 10.9.3 of BS:42020 (2013) for additional information on required timings for fencing.

The CEZ will remain in place for the entire time that heavy machinery (including but not limited to excavators, graders, dumpers, lorries, and other vehicles over 2,000kg kerb weight) is on site.

The CEZ will also help to protect the remaining habitats that will not be affected by the proposed development.

Bonfires

Bonfires should not be lit during hibernation season of October to March to reduce the likelihood of affecting hibernating reptiles, amphibians and small mammals such as hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*.

Waste and materials

Construction waste, building materials and machinery should be stored in a dedicated storage area with fencing during the demolition and construction process. Construction waste should be stored in skips, with all new building materials kept on pallets until immediate use to avoid the possibility of protected species utilising piles as habitat.

To fulfil the following criteria:

- g) disposal of any wastes arising from the works.

Responsibilities

To fulfil the following criteria:

- e) persons responsible for implementing the works.

The following key points should be noted:

- It is the site foreman's responsibility to ensure that this method statement is followed by all site workers, and that toolbox talks and incidents / near misses are recorded.
- It is the client's responsibility to ensure that the site foreman complies with all restrictions within this statement.

- All those involved with the development, including the client, are subordinate to the site ecologist and the recommendations contained within this statement and the attached Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report.
- It is the responsibility of everyone on site to ensure that legislation is not breached, and that the safety of protected species is not jeopardised by negligent practices.
- Wildlife crimes are strict liability offences, meaning that negligent actions, including following instructions are not an excuse in the eyes of the law. Intent, cause and negligence does not apply with regard to strict liability offences.
- Furthermore, an offence would be deemed to have been committed by the instructor should negligent actions be instructed, even if those actions are not specifically undertaken by the instructor.

Document validity

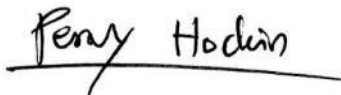
This document remains valid for 12 months from issue, after which re-appraisal may be necessary.

The methodology within this PWMS supersedes that for great crested newts contained within all previously submitted documentation.

Declaration: The information which I have prepared and provided for this report is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct; I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional bona fide opinions.

Printed: Perry Hockin BSc (Hons.), FdSc, ACIEEM - Principal Ecologist

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Perry Hockin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Contractor summary sheet

This sheet provides a summary of the content of this Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS).

Supervision:

All works under ecological supervision

Timings:

1. Construct a compensatory feature for displaced herptiles in an area unaffected by the development
2. Check the site for herptiles with the ecologist
3. Remove any hibernation features slowly, by hand, under supervision
4. Cut vegetation to 150mm during the period April to September
5. Leave for 24 hours
6. Check the site again with the ecologist
7. Cut to ground level during the period April to September
8. Maintain at this level until winter / until supervision is available
9. Strip turf and topsoil during winter / under ecological supervision

DO

- Stop works immediately on spotting an amphibian or reptile
- Tell your colleagues
- Tell the site manager or foreman
- Try to identify the animal if possible, or allow it to escape

DO NOT

- Pick up the animal, unless you can positively identify it as not being a great crested newt
- Try to hurt, kill or distress the animal
- Restart works without authorisation from the site ecologist

ID Guide

			
Common frog – Can be captured • Long hind legs that are kept tucked to the sides • Sits upright • Strong leaping jumps • Pointed snout • Muddy brown, gold and dark green colouration – Common frog • Bright green colouration – Pool frog • Smooth skin differentiates frogs from toads • Ensure the individual is not a newt or toad before capture – Consult ecologist	Common toad – Caution advised • Toads have a less upright stance • Crawls rather than jumps • Smoother rounded snout • Dark brown colouration • Warty skin • Exude toxins from the skin when threatened • Natterjack toad have an unmistakable pale line down the centre of their body from head to tail • Toads don't bite, but they are poisonous. • Some toad species are protected – Consult ecologist	Smooth and palmate newts – Caution advised • All newts are small salamanders • Long bodies with tails the same size as the body • Smooth newts – Dark body, orange underside with black spots, males spotty all over – 10cm in length • Palmate newt – Very similar to smooth newts, duller and browner – 10cm in length • Not to be captured by anyone other than an ecologist, or under an ecologist's direction	Great crested newts – Do not capture • Long bodies with tails the same size as the body • Dark body, males have a prominent crest. Orange underbelly on both sexes • Up to 18cm, noticeably larger than other species, around twice the size. • Protected species – disturbance is a criminal offence



Notes:
This plan has been produced by Arborweald to show ecological enhancements matching those within the accompanying document DKS/1283.4 Condition Discharge 'Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan'

Project:

PWMS at Wickenden Farm, Sharpthorne, West Sussex, RH19 4JD

Drawing title:

Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS)
Drawing number: DKS/1283.6 Version: PWMS001

Key:

Protective fencing — Protective Fencing —
CEZ CEZ

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13/10/25
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Checked by:
AL