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Project: 26_PWMS_02_23
Site: Woodside Grange Woodland Road Hassocks BN6 8EX
Client: Roger Pike



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Project Number:	26_PWMS_02_23
Report Type:	Precautionary Working Method Statement
Site Address:	Woodside Grange Woodsland Road Hassocks BN6 8EX

Role:	Name:	Date:
Instructing Party	Roger Pike	10/02/2026
Consultant	Tom Johnson	10/02/2026

Revision History		
Date:	Version number:	Summary of changes:
12/02/2026	1.0	First Review (Internal)
13/02/2026	1.1	Second Review (Internal)
13/02/2026	1.1	Initial Release
16/02/2026	1.2	Amendment

Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) for Great Crested Newts

Site: Woodside Grange, Woodsland Road, Hassocks, BN6 8EX

Planning Context: Construction of two detached dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping.

Client: Roger Pike

Prepared by: ROAVR Group

Date: February 2026

1. Introduction

This Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) outlines a detailed approach to manage potential impacts on amphibians during works outside the pond buffer zone at Woodside Grange, Woodsland Road, Hassocks. It is prepared in accordance with best practice guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017), Natural England's standing advice, and relevant sections of the Mid Sussex District Council local planning policy.

The PWMS is intended to support planning, where formal survey windows have been missed for the 2025 season. The client acknowledges that this approach may not be accepted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and full presence/absence surveys may still be required in 2026.

Future development plans include draining and backfilling of the pond under ecological supervision, and replacing it with two new wildlife-focused ponds constructed within the site, designed with shallow margins, varied depths, native planting and integrated into the approved SuDS drainage strategy to deliver biodiversity enhancement. **This PWMS does not apply to any works affecting the pond and surrounding buffer zone.** No works within the pond buffer zone shall commence unless and until the appropriate great crested newt compliance route has been secured in writing, including updated survey evidence and, where required, a Natural England mitigation licence or confirmation of entry into the District Level Licensing scheme, together with any necessary written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

2. Background & Ecological Context

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was conducted in April 2023 by David Archer Associates Consultancy. Key findings include:

- The site contains habitat of **average** suitability for great crested newts, including a pond, boundary hedgerows, scrub, deciduous woodland and raised beds.
- A great crested newt e-DNA water sampling survey of the pond was recommended to establish the likely presence/absence of breeding amphibians.
- A subsequent e-DNA survey in May 2023 showed likely no presence of great crested newts.

Due to the time elapsed between the e-DNA survey and proposed developments, Nature Space and Mid Sussex District Council have requested this report to mitigate negative effects on great crested newts while development outside of the pond takes place.

- In September 2025, Nature Space identified the site as falling within the **red impact zone** for great crested newts.

The site covers approximately 1.7 hectares. Habitats present within the site comprise neutral grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, a pond, hedgerows, scrub, ruderal vegetation, scattered trees, existing buildings, and areas of both permeable and impermeable hardstanding.

The site is located in a rural setting to the north of Hassocks. It is bounded by open grassland to the north, bare ground associated with an ongoing development to the east, and woodland to the south and west.

The surrounding landscape is characterised by a combination of suburban development and pastoral farmland, interspersed with hedgerow networks, watercourses, and blocks of deciduous woodland.



Figure 1. Site boundary and pond location

3. Objective

To implement a robust and proportionate precautionary working approach to reduce the risk of harming amphibians during site clearance and ground works, in line with:

- CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment*;
- Natural England's standing advice on protected species;
- Local Plan Policies concerning biodiversity (e.g. Tendring District Council's Policy PPL4);
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

4. Key Measures

4.1 Site Supervision & Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)

- A suitably qualified licensed ecologist must act as the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).
- The ECoW will carry out:
 - A pre-commencement site walkover;
 - Daily checks during the clearance of sensitive areas:
 - Boundary hedgerows, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, scrub areas, raised garden beds, and less frequently mown grassland areas
 - Toolbox talks and contractor briefings;
 - Incident response (e.g. if amphibians are encountered).

4.2 Timing of Works

- All clearance works should be conducted during suitable weather conditions when amphibians are active (typically March–October, weather dependent).
- Work should be avoided during cold snaps, heavy rain, or early mornings when animals may be torpid.

4.3 Habitat Manipulation Strategy (Two-Stage Strimming)

- Vegetation clearance will occur in two stages:
 - Stage 1: Tall vegetation (>20 cm) will be trimmed to 10 cm height.
 - Stage 2 (after 48 hours): remaining vegetation will be trimmed to ground level.
- Trimming must proceed directionally, from the centre of the site towards the boundaries to encourage species into retained refuge zones.

4.4 Refuge Creation Zones

- Natural or artificial refugia (log piles, brash, hessian mats) will be retained or installed at the site's periphery to offer shelter.
- These will be checked periodically by the ECoW.

4.5 Clearance Method

- Hand tools or brush cutters must be used only under direct ECoW supervision.
- Spoil heaps, rubble, brash piles and potential hibernacula will be dismantled by hand and checked.

4.6 Working Area Demarcation

- Heras fencing or high-visibility tape will demarcate the clearance zone.
- Storage areas, welfare facilities and parking will be confined to hardstanding where possible.

4.7 Pond Exclusion Zone

- A minimum 10m ecological buffer shall be established around the pond edge (measured from the top of the bank).
- Erect Heras-type temporary fencing (or similar rigid fencing) along the outer edge of the exclusion zone before any site clearance works.
 - Heras-type fencing will allow stranded amphibians to return to the pond, where solid fencing will not.
- The following activities cannot take place within the buffer zone:
 - No excavation, trenching, ground breaking, or level changes.
 - No vehicle or machinery access, tracking, or compaction.
 - No storage of materials, plant, spoil, skips, cabins, or equipment.
 - No refuelling, fuel storage, concrete mixing or washout.
 - No discharge of surface water, pumped water, or construction runoff.
 - No vegetation clearance, strimming, mowing, or removal of refugia.
 - No installation of services, drainage, lighting columns, or utilities.
 - No external lighting directed toward the pond or buffer.
 - No alteration to pond water levels, margins, or hydrology.
 - No handling, trapping, or relocation of amphibians.
- The buffer width may be increased where space allows to strengthen habitat connectivity.

- Fencing is to be:
 - Installed under Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) supervision.
 - Clearly signed as “Ecological Protection Area - No Access”
 - Maintained in position for the duration of the works and shall only be removed once the required ecological licence (if applicable) and written approval from the Local Planning Authority to undertake works affecting the pond have been obtained.



Figure 2. Site boundary with pond and 10m pond buffer zone overlaid.

4.8 Pollution Prevention Measures

- Silt fencing shall be installed between construction areas and the pond exclusion zone under the direction of the ECoW, ensuring that installation does not create barriers or entrapment risks for amphibians.
- No refuelling within 15m of the pond.
- Concrete washout area located >20m away and bunded.
- Surface water runoff is to be directed away from the pond during construction.
- Regular inspection of sediment controls following rainfall.

4.9 Lighting Control

- No external lighting to illuminate the pond surface or buffer.
- Lighting columns to be:
 - Cowled and directional
 - Warm spectrum (<2700K),
 - Designed to maintain dark corridors.

If a newt is found:

- If it is suspected that a great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) has been found, work must be suspended, and the advice of a suitably licensed GCN ecologist must be sought. A Natural England development licence may be required before works can continue. This may entail considerable delays and costs.
- Should the project overrun significantly (by more than 1-2 years), then further advice must be sought to determine whether additional surveys or licensing are required before work continues.
- At no point should any worker handle a great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) or a suspected great crested newt. Unlicensed handling is illegal, and untrained handling may cause unnecessary stress and injury.
- If, using the supplied handout at the end of this document, the site operatives can **CONFIDENTLY (100% certainty) identify that the newt found is NOT a great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)**, the newt can be carefully moved out of the area of works and placed in a nearby habitat similar to that in which it was found. A newt found on land should not be placed into a pond or other water body.

If amphibians (other than GCN) are found

- If any amphibians (other than great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)) are found within the working area, they should be removed to an area outside of the working zone, preferably in dense vegetation, a rubble pile, or underlying wood (taking care not to squash them).
- Amphibians should be picked up by placing the fingers under the body and lifting, not by grasping any part of them. They can be held still by placing a thumb gently on top of them, if necessary.
- Handling should be kept to a minimum, and latex gloves should be avoided. Vinyl, Nitrile and other non-latex gloves are ok and should be used where possible.
- If the amphibians/reptiles found are hibernating, then they should be collected up and placed in a covered box or bucket while a suitable shelter/hibernaculum is prepared for them under the advice of an ecologist.

5. Toolbox Talk & Contractor Briefing

Prior to work commencing, all contractors must attend a mandatory ecological briefing delivered by the ECoW. This will include:

- Overview of protected species present or potentially present (focus on amphibians);
- Legal obligations under UK wildlife law;
- Site-specific working methods, buffer zones, and refugia;
- Action to be taken if an amphibian is found (i.e., stop work and notify ECoW);
- Incident recording and reporting procedures.
- Sensitive areas and habitats.

Printed briefing sheets will be distributed to all personnel and kept on site. A toolbox talk must be signed by all contractors to represent their understanding of the information outlined within the toolbox talk and their responsibility to adhere to the mitigation procedure outlined within it.

6. Contingency and Escalation

- If any amphibians are found during work, activities will immediately cease, and the ECoW will assess the situation.
- Where appropriate, relocation under ECoW supervision will be conducted to pre-identified receptor areas.
- If high numbers of individuals are encountered, formal surveys and a licence application may be triggered.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

- The ECoW will maintain a daily log of all works, observations, and any ecological incidents.
- A summary post works report will be submitted to the client and may be provided to the LPA on request.

8. Post Habitat Clearance

- Post habitat clearance, the site must be regularly maintained to ensure that new vegetation growth is monitored and managed (so as not to allow the site to return to an overgrown state).
- Post habitat clearance, the grassland areas must be maintained to a short sward between 2.5 and 5cm in length. Areas that were covered in scrub should be maintained free of new scrub formation, with any shoots being pruned back to ground level.

9. Limitations

- This PWMS is a non-licensed method statement and does not replace formal presence/absence surveys.
- It is intended as a proportionate response in cases where works must proceed outside the optimal survey window.
- The LPA retains the right to require further survey effort in support of a planning determination or discharge of conditions.

10. References

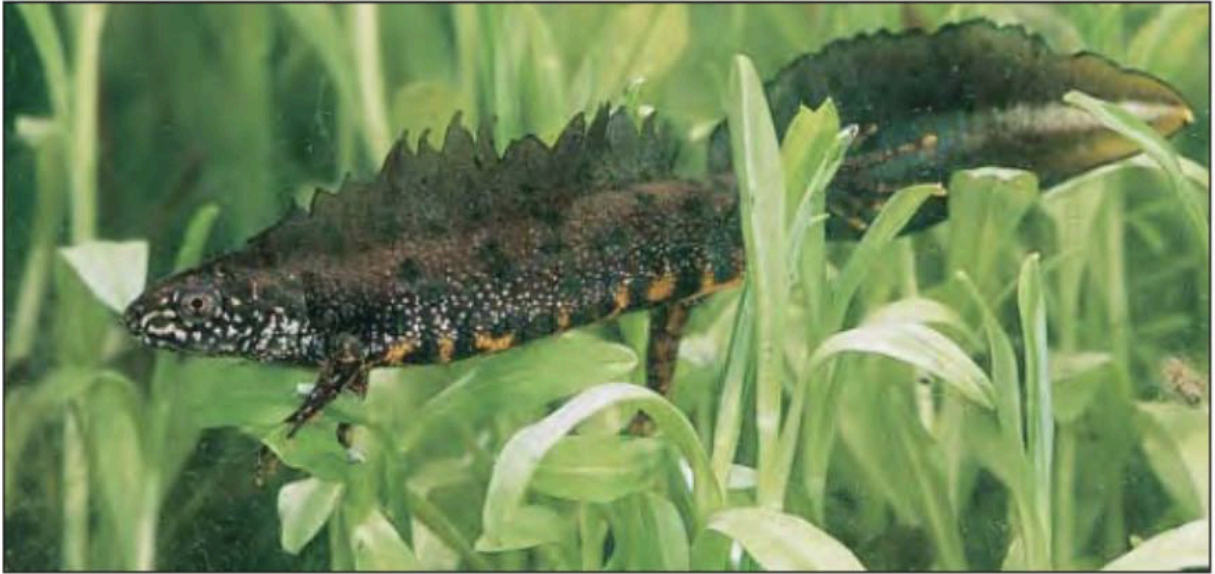
- CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland*.
- Gent, T. & Gibson, S. (2003). *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. JNCC.
- Natural England. *Standing Advice for Protected Species*.
- UK Government. *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*.

11. Appendix A: Identifying great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)s

Identifying great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)s (Information taken from the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) handbook).

- The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is the UK's largest newt, reaching a maximum adult overall length of up to about 170mm
- Mature female length ranges from 90 - 170mm, typically reaching 110-130mm
- Male newts may mature at a length of only 85mm (normally more), and grow to an adult maximum of about 150mm, though more typically 110-120mm
- Adults are easily distinguished from the two other native newt species, the smooth and palmate newts, by size and colouring; these two smaller species reach a maximum of around 100mm
- The skin of adult crested newts is granular in appearance. It has a black or dark brown background colour with darker spots that in males, extend onto the crest. It has very fine white spots on the lower flanks

The male (below) has a jagged crest along the back that dips at the rear of the abdomen, and a smoother-edged crest above and below the tail. The crest decreases in size outside the breeding season. There is a white, silver or grey stripe running from the tail tip along the central, fleshy section of the tail that fades as it approaches the abdomen



Females (below) lack a crest and white tail stripe, but have a yellow-orange stripe running along the bottom edge of the tail. Both sexes have a vivid orange or yellow belly with an irregular pattern of dark black spots or blotches



On land, the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) appears virtually black, and in males, the crest shrinks back against the body. Males of all newts have a relatively more swollen cloaca (vent)



Comparison: great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) (darker) & smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*)



On leaving the water, great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) juveniles are similar in appearance to adults, apart from lacking the black spots/patterns that develop on the orange belly as they grow. The pattern becomes 'fixed' as the adults approach maximum size.

