



GREAT CRESTED NEWT EDNA REPORT

**St. Augustine's C of E Primary School,
Haywards Heath**

On behalf of: AtkinsRéalis

Client:	AtkinsRéalis			
Project:	St. Augustine's C of E Primary School, Haywards Heath			
Reference:	LLD3470-ECO-REP-002-00-GCN			
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Validity:

This report is valid for 18 months from the date of the site visit. If works have not commenced by this date, an updated site visit should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to assess any changes in the habitats present on site, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.



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SUMMARY

Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned by AtkinsRéalis to undertake an eDNA survey within St. Augustine's C of E Primary School, Haywards Heath (located around central grid reference: *TQ 36812 23404* – hereafter referred to as 'the site').

1no. pond was identified within the site, which was assessed as offering 'poor' suitability for great crested newts.

The pond was subject to eDNA survey, with water samples collected on the 15th of April 2026 before analysis by SureScreen Scientifics.

Analysis of the samples indicated the likely absence of great crested newts within the on-site pond, therefore no mitigation licence with regards to this species is required. Given the known population of GCN within 1.0km of the site, basic avoidance measures should be implemented on site during works. These should include the delivery of a toolbox talk, careful removal of any debris / spoil piles and checking of footings and trenches each morning before the start of works. Should any great crested newt be found on site during site clearance or construction all works should cease while a suitably qualified ecologist is contacted for advice.

Ponds are an important habitat for numerous species, particularly common amphibians and invertebrates. The onsite pond is expected to be retained and protected throughout the development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology has been commissioned to undertake a great crested newt (GCN) eDNA survey to inform the proposed development of St. Augustine's C of E Primary School, Haywards Heath (*Grid Reference: TQ 36812 23404 – hereafter referred to as 'the site'*).

1.2 Surveys were recommended following the original Preliminary Ecological Appraisal completed by this company in February 2025, which identified 1no. pond within or immediately adjacent to the proposed construction zone.

Survey Rationale

1.3 The site consists of 3no school buildings (B01, B02, B03) with the surrounding grounds consisting of hardstanding, vegetated gardens and woodland. A pond (P1) is also present on site.

1.4 P1 was subject to a HSI and had a score of 'poor'. The site itself was of relatively low suitability due to the site being situated in a fairly urban environment, and in constant use as a school. There were suitable areas of habitat by way of modified grassland and woodland, however these areas were not connected to the wider habitat. It was therefore determined that the site was of **low** suitability for GCN and other amphibians. Overall, it was likely that GCN were absent, however it was not possible to completely scope GCN out at this stage, particularly as P1 is so close to B03, which is scheduled for demolition. Therefore, a single GCN eDNA survey on P1 was completed within the recommended period of mid-April to June inclusive to assess the potential impacts upon this species, in order to rule out the presence of great crested newts within the pond.

Site Information

1.5 The site covers an area of c. 0.4ha and consists of a square shaped plot utilised as a school, with hardstanding, buildings and areas of woodland, vegetated garden and a pond.

Surrounding Landscape

- 1.6 The site is located within a suburban setting, within Scaynes Hill. It is surrounded by woodland to the north, a recreational ground to the east and south and residential buildings to the east. Arable farmland extends into the wider environment in the east, west, and south.

Development Proposals

- 1.7 It is understood that the proposals are for the demolition of the Portakabin building on-site and the partial demolition and extension of the main building on-site. All existing habitats are to be retained.

Aims

- 1.8 The aim of the amphibian and great crested newt survey was;
- *To identify presence / absence of amphibians (including great crested newt (GCN) within the water bodies identified within a potential impact risk zone of the site.*
 - *If presence identified, to suggest population size classes for newt species recorded;*
 - *To complete all data requirements for any possible application to Natural England for a mitigation licence if required; and;*
 - *To suggest mitigation to avoid / minimise impacts of the scheme to Protected Species if necessary.*

2.0 LEGISLATION

2.1 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this report includes:

- *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;*
- *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);*
- *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.*

2.2 The great crested newt is included on *Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* (as amended) and *Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) which makes it an offence, amongst other things, to deliberately capture, injure, kill or disturb any such species. In addition, this notification also prohibits the deliberate taking or destroying of any eggs and the damaging, destroying or blocking access to a breeding site or resting place of any such species.

2.3 The common toad (*Bufo bufo*) is a target of UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans and listed as *Species of Principle Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*. Local Authorities are obliged to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity with particular emphasis on targeted species.

2.4 In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. 'Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' states that development should be '*minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.*'

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (*MAGIC*) was consulted for information regarding granted EPS licences within 2.0km, and location of ponds within 500.0m radius of the proposed construction site.

3.2 HSI Assessment

- 3.2.1 The waterbodies within 500.0m of the site (*where access allowed*), were subject to a HSI assessment in February 2025.
- 3.2.2 The *Habitat Suitability Index (HSI)* was developed by *Oldham et al (2000)* as a way of providing a numerical index allowing a direct comparison to be made between different water bodies. This index assesses ponds against ten different criteria, each of which have a bearing on the likelihood of great crested newts (*GCN*) being present in the pond under consideration.
- 3.2.3 The ten attributes against which ponds are assessed are:
- *Geographic Location;*
 - *Pond Area (at its highest water level);*
 - *Permanence;*
 - *Water Quality;*
 - *Perimeter Shading;*
 - *Numbers of Wildfowl;*
 - *Numbers of Fish Present;*
 - *Pond Count (within a 1.0km radius);*
 - *Terrestrial Habitat (within 250.00m);*
 - *Macrophyte Coverage.*
- 3.2.4 The HSI results in a score between 1 and 0; with 1 being optimal conditions and 0 being unlikely to support a population. However, the index merely gives an indication as to whether a pond has the potential to support GCNs and is not a substitute for more detailed presence / absence surveys for protected species of amphibian. The evaluation criteria is shown in *Table No. 01* below.

Table No. 01 – HSI Evaluation Criteria

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
<0.5	Poor
0.5-0.59	Below Average
0.6-0.69	Average
0.7-0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

3.3 eDNA Survey

3.3.1 An eDNA survey of the on-site pond was completed on the 15th of April 2026.

3.3.2 20no. water samples were collected from the margin of the pond, with samples spaced as evenly as possible to collect a representative sample. All samples were collected using a sterile sampling kit as supplied by SureScreen Scientifics.

3.3.3 Each sample was stored in a refrigerator before return to SureScreen Scientifics for analysis. The results of the survey indicate the presence or absence of great crested newt environmental DNA within the water body.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Desk Study

- 4.1.1 A desk study highlighted known records for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* from within the search area, including a positive survey license return from May and June 2017 in Anchor Wood, 0.4km south of the site. Records for other amphibians include common toad *bufo bufo*, common frog *Rana temporaria*, as well as smooth and palmate newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* and *helveticus*.

4.2 HSI Assessment

- 4.2.1 The pond had low macrophyte cover with no fish present, low water quality and low terrestrial habitat coverage.
- 4.2.2 The HSI Index, as shown in the table below dictates the pond provides poor habitat suitability for great crested newt.

Table No.2 – Summary HSI Results

SI Description	P1
Location	1.0
Pond area	0.01
Permanence	1.0
Water quality	0.33
Shade	0.8
Waterfowl effect	1.0
Fish presence	1.0
Pond density	1.0
Terrestrial habitat	0.33
Macrophyte cover	0.6
HSI Score	0.47
<i>Pond suitability</i>	<i>Poor</i>

4.3 eDNA Survey

- 4.3.1 The pond was negative for great crested newt environmental DNA, suggesting the absence of GCN within the waterbody.

4.4 Survey Constraints / Considerations

- 4.4.1 All phase 2 surveys were undertaken at the appropriate time of the year by trained, licenced surveyors. There were no constraints recoded relating to survey methodology, therefore the results are considered to a true representation of conditions on site.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Analysis of the samples indicated the likely absence of great crested newts within the on-site pond, therefore no mitigation licence with regards to this species is required. Given the known population of GCN within 1.0km of the site, basic avoidance measures should be implemented on site during works. These should include the delivery of a toolbox talk, careful removal of any debris / spoil piles and checking of footings and trenches each morning before the start of works. Should any great crested newt be found on site during site clearance or construction all works should cease while a suitably qualified ecologist is contacted for advice.
- 5.2 Ponds are an important habitat for numerous species, particularly common amphibians and invertebrates. The onsite pond is expected to be retained and protected throughout the development.
- 5.3 Provided mitigation outlined in this report is followed, the scheme shall have a negligible impact upon amphibians.

6.0 REFERENCES

English Nature (2001) Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines, English Nature.

Froglife (2001) Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook. Froglife.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, (1998) Herpetofauna Workers' Manual. JNCC, Peterborough.

Natural England (2015) Template for Method Statement to support application for licence under Regulation 53(2)e of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) in respect of great crested newts (Triturus cristatus). Form WML-A14-2 (Version December 2015).

Appendix A – Images of Waterbodies



Image No.01 – View of P1

Appendix B – eDNA Results

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GCN eDNA Analysis

Summary

When great crested newts (GCN), *Triturus cristatus*, inhabit a pond, they continuously release small amounts of their DNA into the environment. By collecting and analyzing water samples, we can detect these small traces of environmental DNA (eDNA) to confirm GCN habitation or establish GCN absence.

Results

Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Degradation Check	Inhibition Check	Result	Positive Replicates
R26 0287	St Augustine's School Pond 1		Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12

Matters affecting result: none

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