



Great Crested Newt Report

Land to South of
Hammerwood Rd
Ashurst Wood

June 2026 (v01)



Project details		
Site	Land Off Hammerwood Road, Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood, East Grinstead, RH19 3RX	
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Associated reports	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, The Ecology Partnership, July 2025	
Document history		
Version	Date issued	Changes/comments
01	June 2026	N/A
Company details		
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 CIEEM REGISTERED PRACTICE 2025-2026		

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The contents of this report have been produced with due consideration of current best practice guidance, and in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct.

Data within this report is valid for a maximum of 18 months from the date of the survey. After this period, an updated site visit will be required to determine a new ecological baseline. More up-to-date survey data may be required for a planning application or licensing, depending on conditions and impacts.

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of this report and its contents, in view of potential ecological constraints to development or the likely presence or absence of species, it must only be viewed as a snap-shot in time and, therefore, not be viewed as definitive. Due to external factors, such as seasonality, weather etc, having the potential to affect survey results, no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes that may, or may not occur, after the date this report was produced.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SITE	An area of woodland dominated by cherry laurel, off Hammerwood Road.
PROPOSAL	It is proposed for the construction of 12 residential houses with associated access and gardens on this allocated site.
HISTORIC SURVEYS & KEY FINDINGS	- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), including a walkover survey, by The Ecology Partnership (2025). - The survey found that the majority of the Site comprised poor-quality habitat for great crested newts. - It was not considered likely that great crested newts would be using the Site and as such, the use of reasonable avoidance measures (RAMS) were considered appropriate mitigation. - Consultation comments were received and further survey information was requested.
SURVEYS COMPLETED	A habitat assessment and presence/likely absence survey of two ponds within 250m of the Site using eDNA sampling.
KEY FINDINGS	- A total of eight waterbodies were identified within 500m of the Site, however, only two with no barriers to dispersal, were found to still exist or have water in them. These two ponds (Pond 2 & Pond 3) were subject to an eDNA survey. - The remaining six waterbodies were found to either have dried up or be separated from the Site by a barrier which would prevent newts accessing the Site. - Pond 3, approximately 245m west of the Site, was found to be positive for great crested newt DNA. - Pond 2, approximately 229m south to the south of the Site, was found to be negative for great crested newt DNA. - An assessment was undertaken of the habitat suitability between Pond 3 and the Site, and it was considered that due to the presence of better quality habitat in between (rough grassland and woodland), great crested newts were unlikely to access the Site. - No further surveys for great crested newts are considered necessary. - Suggestion for a RAMs Method Statement has been provided for site clearance, during construction and post-development to ensure there are no impacts to great crested newts or their habitats. - Enhancements have been suggested to increase the value of the Site for biodiversity.
OVERALL FINDING	- Two ponds within 500m of the Site were subject to a presence/likely absence survey, and one pond approximately 245m to the west, was found to support great crested newts. - Precautionary mitigation measures have been recommended during site clearance, construction and post development.



- Enhancement measures have been recommended that would result in a net improvement in opportunities for bats at the Site.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Deepdene Ecology Ltd was instructed by James Caldwell of Virtue Land to undertake a habitat assessment for great crested newts at 'Land south of Hammerwood Road, Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood, East Grinstead, RH19 3RX' (from hereon in referred to as the 'Site'). A planning application has been submitted to Mid Sussex District Council for the construction of 12 residential dwelling with access and associated gardens and landscaping.

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was undertaken at the Site by The Ecology Partnership in 2024 (updated in 2025). The Site was found to support areas of woodland/scrub that were considered to be of poor quality for great crested newts. The areas were dominated by cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* with very limited ground flora and predominantly bare ground, which provides limited foraging and resting places. Ponds were identified within 500m of the Site.

The planning application was submitted and consultee comments have been received from Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) and NatureSpace's Newt Officer. NatureSpace have requested further information in relation to the likely presence of great crested newts on the Site, and the potential impacts of the proposals on the species.

This report looks to provide the requested information to ensure that sufficient information is available to the LPA and their consultees prior to determination.

1.2 The Site

The Site (TQ 42375 36648) comprised of an area of poor quality woodland to the south of Hammerwood Road and west of Yewhurst Close (see **Figure 1**) in East Grinstead. It is located within a residential area, comprising detached and semi-detached properties with associated gardens. The wider landscape includes woodland, pasture with mature trees, and hedgerows, interspersed with further residential dwellings and garden plots. At a broader scale, the landscape contains interconnected areas of woodland, including ancient woodland situated approximately 270m from the Site.

The habitat on Site consisted of woodland with dense, mature cherry laurel dominant in areas, along with rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, cypress trees *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, goat willow *Salix caprea* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. The Site was connected to a wider block of woodland which included cherry laurel, rhododendron, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with mature lime *Tilia × europaea* and oak *Quercus robur* trees also present. There was limited ground cover within the Site, with some areas of the wider woodland having some ground flora present in place.



Figure 1: Aerial photograph of the Site (indicative only). Image taken from Google Earth.

1.3 Proposed Development

A planning application has been submitted for the construction of 12 residential houses with associated gardens, parking and access. The Site is an allocated site (SA26) on the Mid Sussex District Council Local Plan for residential development.

A full set of drawings will be provided with the planning application with the existing and proposed site plans provided in **Appendix B**.

1.4 Scope of the Assessment

The scope of the assessment was to provide more information on the presence/likely absence of great crested newts at the Site. This report presents the results of a great crested newt eDNA survey of ponds within 500m undertaken in May 2026. The aim of the survey was to determine if great crested newts are present within the wider landscape, and to outline the mitigation, enhancement and licensing that would be required to ensure that the proposed development could proceed without contravening wildlife legislation.

1.5 Summary of relevant legislation

Great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are a European Protected Species and the animals, their eggs and both their breeding (waterbodies) and resting places (terrestrial habitat) are legally protected. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) Reg 41, it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a great crested newt, or damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by a great crested newt. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection or disturb a great crested newt in such a place.

As great crested newts are legally protected, if works are proposed that are considered likely to harm or impact great crested newts or their habitats, or block access to them, a Mitigation Licence or District Level Licence can be obtained that would allow works to legally take place.

Further details on the relevant legislation and policy is provided in **Appendix A**.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey

A great crested newt eDNA survey was undertaken of the two ponds within 500m (Pond 2 & 3, Figure 1, **Appendix C**) following the methodology outlined within Biggs *et al.*, (2014). The samples were collected by a licensed surveyor (Nadine Clark BSc MSc MCIEEM, Licence reference: 2025-82208-SCI-CL08)) on the 29th May 2026. Twenty water samples were collected from each waterbody and from 100% of the water edge. The water samples were refrigerated and sent by courier to SureScreen Scientific for eDNA analysis.

The test kits were obtained from Surescreen Scientific who follow the water sample analysis protocol required within Biggs *et al.* (2014) and who received a 100% proficiency test score in 2025 showing that their methods accurately identify the presence of great crested newts.

2.2 Habitat assessment

A brief habitat assessment was undertaken of the habitat between the two ponds and the Site. This included a walkover of the areas to determine the habitat type and suitability for great crested newts.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Great crested newt presence/likely absence survey (eDNA)

There are eight waterbodies within 500m. Each waterbody was assessed with the findings provided in **Table 1**. The locations of these ponds are provided within the figure in **Appendix C**.

Table 1: Waterbodies present within 500m of the Site.

Pond Number	Location in relation to the Site	Description	Comments/ presence absence	Barriers to dispersal (if applicable)	Photograph (if applicable)
Pond 1	~190m southeast	A disused swimming pool which had been purportedly drained at the time of the access request to be refilled for swimming pool use.	Survey was not possible as owners had drained the pool at the time of the survey. The application of chlorine would also render the pool not suitable for amphibians.	N/A	N/A
Pond 2	~229m south	Woodland pond to south of the Site. Shaded, with little vegetation present. Good quality habitat found immediately around the pond (good quality woodland with ground flora).	The eDNA analysis showed that the pond was negative for great crested newt DNA.	There are no significant barriers to dispersal.	

Pond 3	~245m west	Small garden pond set within grounds of Moonraker House.	The eDNA analysis showed that the pond was positive for great crested newt DNA.	There are minor barriers to dispersal with small access roads between the pond and Site. Only garden habitats between the Site and pond.	
Pond 4	~250m southwest	Pond set within woodland that according to the owners has been filled in and no longer exists.	No pond to survey.	N/A	N/A
Pond 5	~290m south	Pond within woodland. Did not appear to be present any longer with a depression in the ground, but no water present.	No pond to survey.	N/A	

Pond 6	~430m east	Pond within woodland	Not surveyed	Barrier of Hammerwood Road and closed board fencing around Yewhurst Close. Agreed to be a barrier to dispersal as per NatureSpace Consultation Response (12 th March 2026).	N/A
Pond 7	~380m northeast	Field pond	Not surveyed in 2026 but was surveyed in 2019 as part of planning application DM/20/0799. No evidence of great crested newts	Barriers, as per Pond 6	N/A
Pond 8	~430m northeast	Field pond	A low population of great crested newts in 2019 found during surveys in relation to application DM/20/0799	Barriers, as per Pond 6	N/A

3.2 Terrestrial habitat assessment

Photographs were taken of the habitat in and around Pond 2 and 3 to confirm its suitability for great crested newts (see **Table 2**).

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Table 2: Habitat assessment.

	
Photograph 1: Good quality habitat within the southern woodland around Pond 2 and 5.	Photograph 2: Grassland habitat between Pond 3 and the Site with the good quality woodland habitat including ancient woodland to the south.
	
Photograph 3: Poorer quality woodland habitat present within the Site.	

4 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION

4.1 Discussion of findings

There are eight ponds within 500m of the Site (Ponds 1-8):

- Ponds 1, 4 & 5 were all noted to either not exist or not hold water at the time of the survey.
- Ponds 6, 7 & 8 were all at least 380m from the Site and beyond significant barriers to dispersal that if great crested newts were present within the ponds, they would not be able to access the Site.
- Pond 3, a small garden pond, approximately 245m west of the Site was found to support great crested newts with the eDNA sample showing positive evidence of great crested newts.
- Pond 2 to the south of the Site was found to be negative for great crested newt eDNA.

Given the presence of great crested newts within Pond 3, approximately 245m to the west of the Site, consideration of the potential for impacts on great crested newts as a result of development is required.

4.1.1 Potential impacts: Loss of habitat

The Natural England 'Rapid Risk Assessment tool' (Natural England, 2023¹) can be used to assess the likelihood of an offence being committed based on the worst-case scenario, which is that there are breeding great crested newts within Pond 3 (between 100 – 250m from the Site). The Site is 0.48ha and the potential loss of all natural habitat (including habitat that is not suitable) results in a score of 0.1 which is 'offence highly unlikely' (see **Table 3**).

Table 3: Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:		GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY

Given that the majority of the habitats on Site are of limited value to newts, it is unlikely that there will be a significant loss of habitat for great crested newts. Most of the natural habitat,

¹ Natural England (2020). *Template for Method Statement to support application for licence under Regulation 55(2)(e) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in respect of great crested newts Triturus cristatus. Form WML-A14-2* (Version May 2024). Natural England, Peterborough

which in this worst case scenario is assumed lost, will in fact be subject to landscaping, including gardens.

There is better quality terrestrial habitat present closer to the pond (woodland 150m south and rough grassland 60m south, see **Table 2**) and therefore, it is also unlikely that the Site would be regularly used by great crested newts.

The habitats present between Pond 3, and the Site consists of buildings, hardstanding and gardens, which whilst unlikely to provide a major barrier to dispersal, are suboptimal habitats for great crested newts and would provide a minor barrier.

The loss of 0.48ha of suboptimal habitat approximately 245m to the east of Pond 3 is highly unlikely to have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of great crested newts not even taking into account the higher quality habitat in closer proximity to the Pond.

4.1.2 Risk to individual newts during site clearance and construction

As discussed above, the loss of habitat is unlikely to result in any significant impacts, however, in addition to the habitat loss, it is also necessary to consider the risk of harm to individual newts during the clearance/construction phase.

Great crested newts are typically stated as travelling up to 500m from a pond and using terrestrial habitat within that distance, however the core habitat zone is 50m within which, the majority of newts will reside. Where high quality habitat exists closer to a pond that provides suitable foraging and refugia opportunities, the distance required to meet the needs of the great crested newt population is reduced. The Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment (see **Table 3**, above) considers this as habitat further from ponds requires a larger area to be lost to have the same impact risk as smaller areas of habitat closer to a pond.

Pond 3, which was confirmed to support great crested newts is located ~245m from the Site and due to the following reasons, it is not likely that great crested newt will travel from the pond to the Site:

- 1) The presence of good quality habitat near the pond (rough grassland 60m and high quality woodland 150m).
- 2) The presence of buildings, hardstanding and gardens providing suboptimal intermediary habitat between the pond and the Site.
- 3) The distance of the Site to the proposed pond (245m away).
- 4) The presence of suboptimal habitat within the Site.

Overall, when the habitats within the Site, the distance from the Site, the optimal habitat between the pond and Site are all considered, it is not considered likely that great crested newts would be regularly using the habitat on the Site. However, in order to reduce this residual risk even further, a Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) Method Statement should be followed.

The Method Statement would detail the main steps to ensure that no individuals are harmed by the proposals and this includes the following details outlined below.

Ecological briefing (toolbox talk)

The details of the RAMS should be explained to the Contractor by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) through a toolbox talk. The ecologist would explain to Site personnel how to identify common amphibians including great crested newts, the legislation afforded to them and what to do if one is found. A copy of the RAMS should be available on Site at all times during the works and the contact details of a SQE will be provided to the Contractor in case an animal is found at any point.

Temporary fencing of the working area

The retained habitat should be fenced with temporary fencing (e.g. Netlon or Heras) prior to any works on Site. The fencing should be retained throughout the works to ensure the habitat outside of the works area is protected throughout. There must be no encroachment of machinery or spoil within areas of habitat outside of the works areas.

Hand search

Prior to the clearance of the brash piles, logs and tree roots, a hand search of the area should be undertaken by the SQE. Following completion of the hand search and once authorised by the SQE, clearance within the area would be undertaken using hand tools (a strimmer, hand-held brush cutter, chainsaw) only.

Construction works would not be permitted to start until hand searching and habitat manipulation works have been completed and the SQE has advised the area is clear for the works to proceed.

If a great crested newt was found, then all works must cease immediately until a way forward has been agreed with Natural England. The positive eDNA test for pond 3 is sufficient information for a great crested newt European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence to be obtained if required with only a presence/likely absence survey under 4 years old required by Natural England given the distance away and the level of impact.

Vegetation clearance

All scrub habitat should be cut to a height of no less than 150mm with the arising removed and then left for 48hrs to allow any animals to disperse naturally. The habitat can then be cleared to ground level, and this should be done in a sequential pattern to avoid trapping animals in more suitable habitat and encourage any wildlife to move away from the works area. Site clearance should avoid the hibernation period to minimise the risk to individual newts in the unlikely event of hibernating individuals being present.

Soil stripping

Where any soil stripping is undertaken, this should be undertaken in a sequential pattern moving towards retained habitat around the Site. This should not be undertaken in very wet weather when newts are more likely to be active, or during the hibernation season where they may be immobile due to the temperature.

Material Storage

The storage of material and machinery should be limited to hardstanding where possible and materials stored on pallets to prevent there being a risk of great crested newts using materials as refugia. No spoil heaps will be permitted for the same reasons. Any materials/waste should be removed from Site or skips used to prevent artificial refugia from being accidentally created.

Excavations

Any trenches or deep pits that are left open overnight should be provided with a means of escape or where possible covered overnight to prevent animals including newts becoming trapped. This could simply be in the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface or plywood covers. The trenches/pits should be inspected each morning by a nominated member of staff to ensure that animals have become trapped overnight. Should a great crested newt become trapped, an ecologist should be contacted immediately for further advice. Alternatively, smaller trenches etc should be backfilled where possible before the end of the day to avoid open trenches.

Retaining connectivity to the wider area

The Site comprises a small portion of woodland adjacent to existing residential development. Surrounding woodland and boundary trees will be retained, ensuring that connectivity within the wider area is maintained. Additional planting of species beneficial to local wildlife (see **Appendix D**) as part of the landscaping proposals around the Site boundaries will further enhance habitat connectivity.

Provision of refugia and enhanced habitat post development

The inclusion of a dead wood pile within the landscaping would benefit amphibians (see **Section 5** for further details). There will be open areas of landscaping and grassland around the proposed new properties, and it is recommended that these areas are targeted for enhancement.

Ecological supervision and input during landscaping

All landscaping works should be undertaken by hand to ensure minimal impacts on the suitable habitat.

Drainage

It is not proposed to connect the Site to the mains sewage system for the purpose of dealing with run-off, so there will be no gully pots and kerbed roads that could trap amphibians

including newts post-development. Instead, geocellular and trench soakaways are proposed to be incorporated into the design and as such, there will be no increased risk of mortality of amphibians, should they access the Site, as a result of the proposed drainage scheme post development.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENTS

5.1 Ecological enhancements

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity where possible when determining planning applications. The development plans should maximise opportunities for enhancement, in order to achieve a net increase in biodiversity. This is in accordance with the NERC Act (2006) which requires that *“every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.”*

The measures outlined below will help improve the Site overall for biodiversity.

5.1.1 Habitats

Any new tree or shrub planting in the Site should include a diverse mix of native species and a suitable list has been provided in **Appendix E**. The planting of native species rich hedgerows around the boundaries of the properties would be beneficial.

5.1.2 Refugia

Log pile refugia should be incorporated into the design plan for the Site (see **Figure 2**). This would provide a suitable refuge for species such as amphibians, reptiles and hedgehog which may all be present within the wider area. In addition, invertebrates, particularly dead wood consuming species, would benefit. It is recommended that the log pile is located in an undisturbed area of the grounds such as close to hedgerows or near the southern boundary of the Site.

In order to construct the log pile, branches at least 10cm thick should be used and these are stacked to create a pile at least 50cm tall. Where possible, a range of different sized logs and sticks should be used. To ensure the log pile remains stable, stakes or sticks will be inserted into the ground to prevent the logs from rolling.

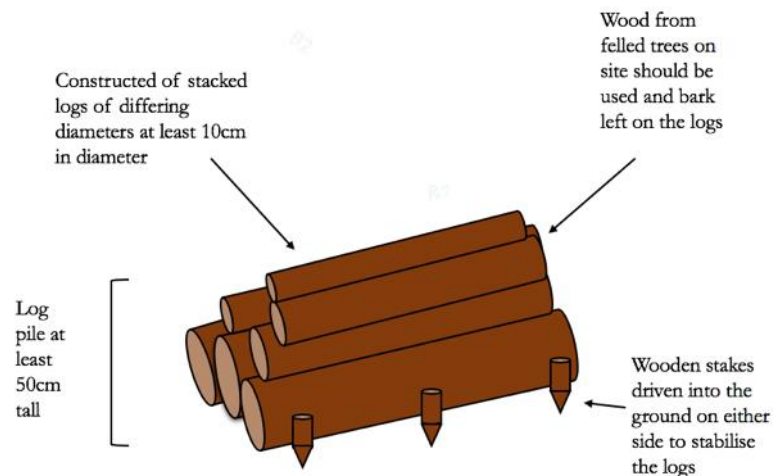


Figure 2: Example of a log pile that could be created as an enhancement on Site.

6 CONCLUSION

This report is based on great crested newt eDNA surveys of two ponds within 250m of the Site. A positive great crested newt eDNA result was recorded for a small garden pond to the west of the Site. The risk of encountering newts within the Site is considered to be low and the risk of harm to great crested newts and their favourable conservation status can be further reduced to negligible levels through the adherence to RAMs working practices. Mitigation measures as well as enhancement measures have been outlined within this report.

It is considered that sufficient information has been provided in this report, the associated PEA report and the previous consultation response from The Ecology Partnership, to allow the LPA and their consultees to assess the impacts of the proposals on biodiversity prior to determination.

Appendix A - Summary of Relevant Legislation and Policy

Great crested newts are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through inclusion in Schedule 5. They are also included in Schedule II of Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (“EC Habitats Directive”) which defines European protected species of animals.

Under the above pieces of legislation, it is an offence to:

- kill, injure or take an individual;
- possess any part of an individual either alive or dead;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by these species for shelter, rest, protection or breeding;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb these species whilst using any place of shelter or protection; or
- deliberate disturb in such a way as to be likely to impair their ability to:
 - survive, breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
 - keep (possess), transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead bat, or any part of, or anything derived from a bat.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024

The NPPF aims to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. Chapter 15 ‘*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*’ details what local planning policies should consider with regard to planning applications.

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

180 a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

180 d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

185 a) Identify map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors, and stepping stones

that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

185 b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity;

186 a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused; and

186 d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Regional Planning Policy

Relevant regional planning policies for South East England are detailed in the following documents.

The South East Plan (2009)

The South East Plan was published in May 2009. It has since been revoked with the exception of Policy NRM6 on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). Policy NRM6 states “New residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths SPA will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects, such measures must be agreed with Natural England.”

Local Planning Policy : Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031

Mid Sussex District Council’s planning policy in relation to biodiversity includes Policy DP12 in the district plan (Adopted 2018) which states:

DP12: Protection and enhancement of countryside

Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and 15) To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.

Evidence Base: A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex, A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study. The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty.

Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area

boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or
- it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.

The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the quality of rural and landscape character.

Built-up area boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council. Economically viable mineral reserves within the district will be safeguarded.

The District Plan also has specific planning Policy in relation to Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC in Policy DP17

DP17: Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities.

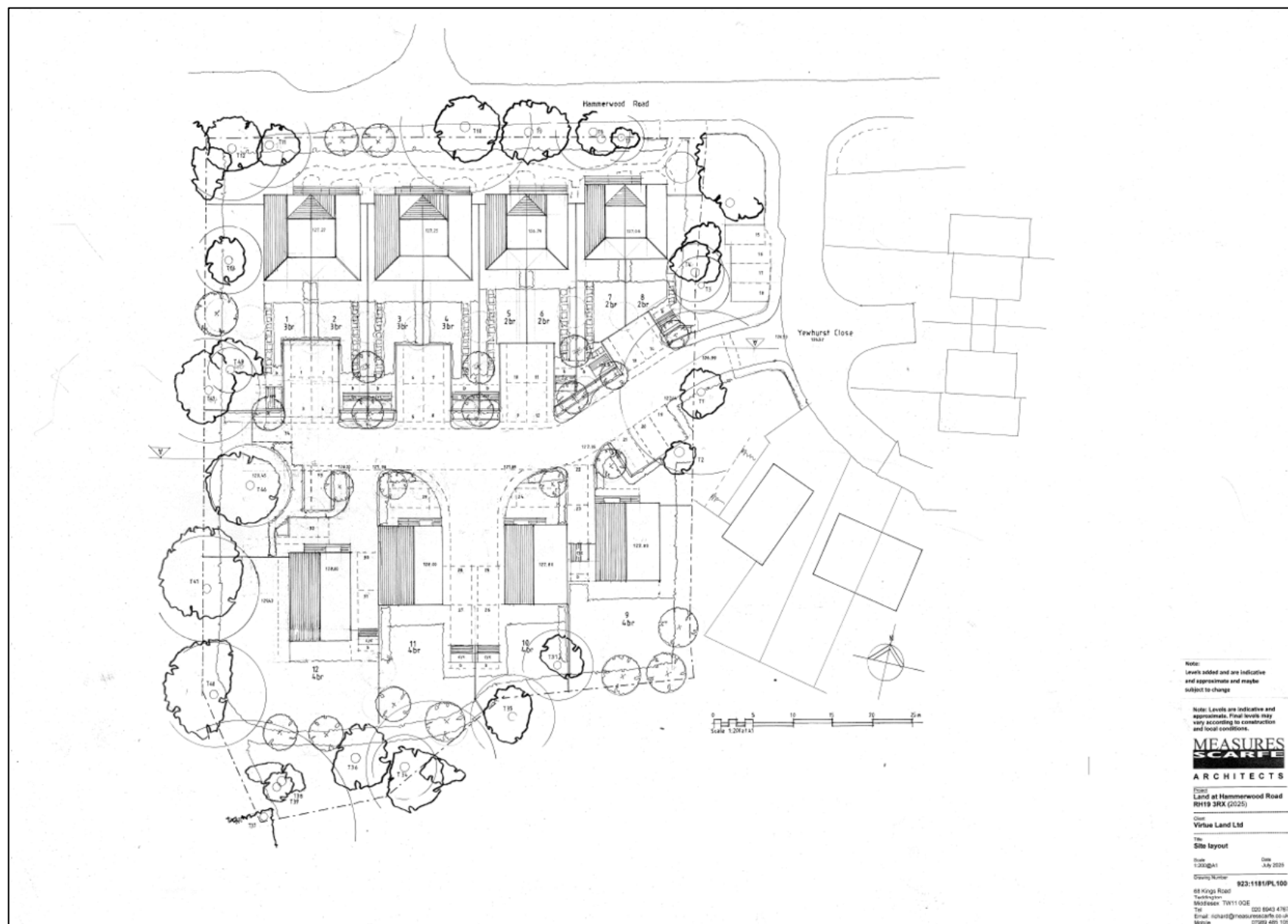
Evidence Base: Ashdown Forest Visitor Survey Data Analysis, Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Mid Sussex District Plan, Visitor Access Patterns on Ashdown Forest. In order to prevent adverse effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, new development likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination with other development, will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Within a 400 metres buffer zone around Ashdown Forest, mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA and, therefore, residential development will not be permitted. Within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA, residential development leading to a net increase in dwellings will be required to contribute to mitigation through:

- 1) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to the minimum level of 8Ha per 1,000 net increase in population; or a financial contribution to SANGs elsewhere; or the provision of bespoke mitigation; and
- 2) A financial contribution to the Ashdown Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy.

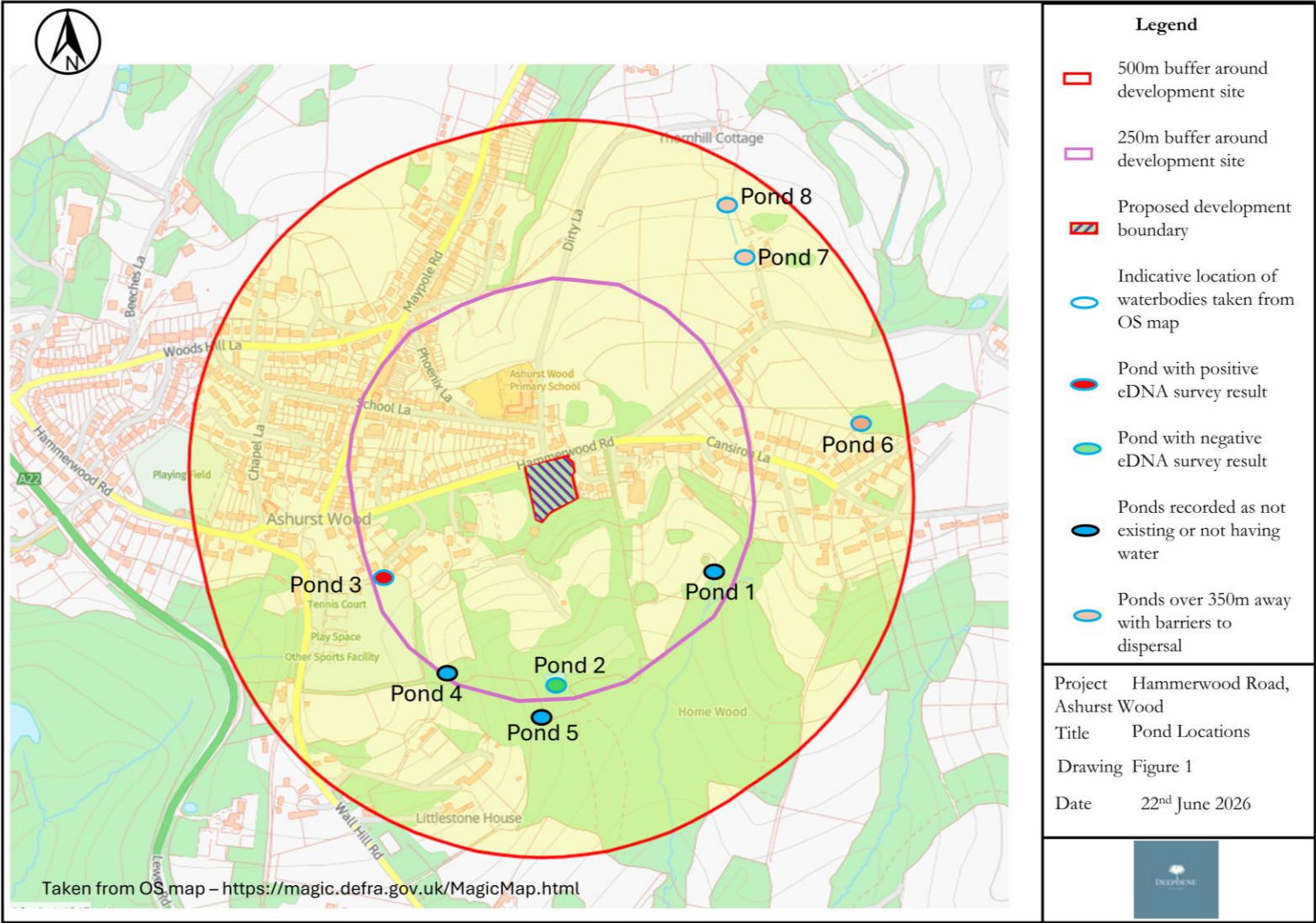
Large schemes proposed adjacent or close to the boundary of the 7km zone of influence may require mitigation for the SPA. Such proposals for development will be dealt with on a case-by

case basis. Where bespoke mitigation is provided, these measures will need to be in place before occupation of development and must be managed and maintained in perpetuity. The effectiveness of such mitigation will need to be demonstrated prior to approval of the development. Bespoke mitigation will need to be discussed and agreed by the District Council as the competent authority following advice from Natural England.

Appendix B –Proposed Site Plan (Measures Scarfe Architects, July 2025)



Appendix C- Waterbody Locations within 500m of Site Boundary



Appendix D- eDNA survey results for Pond 2 & 3

Folio No: 2228-2026
Purchase Order: PO 2332
Contact: Deepdene Ecology
Issue Date: 18.06.2026
Received Date: 04.06.2026



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
GCN26 06024	Hammerwood Road - Pond 3 Moonraker	TQ 421 364	Pass	Pass	Positive	11/12
GCN26 06027	Hammerwood Road - Pond 2 Woodland	TQ 423 363	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12

Matters affecting result: none

Reported by: Ruby Fielding

Approved by: Jennifer Higginbottom

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Appendix D- eDNA survey results for Pond 2 & 3

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Methodology

The samples detailed above have been analyzed for the presence of GCN eDNA following the protocol stated in DEFRA WC1067 'Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt, Appendix 5.' (Biggs et al. 2014). Each of the 6 sub-sample tubes are first centrifuged and pooled together into a single sample tube which then undergoes DNA extraction. The extracted sample is then analyzed using real-time PCR (qPCR), which uses species-specific molecular markers to amplify GCN DNA within a sample. These markers are unique to GCN DNA, meaning that there should be no detection of closely related species.

If GCN DNA is present, the DNA is amplified up to a detectable level, resulting in positive species detection. If GCN DNA is not present then amplification does not occur, and a negative result is recorded. Analysis of eDNA requires attention to detail to prevent the risk of contamination. True positive controls, negative controls, and spiked synthetic DNA are included in every analysis and these have to be correct before any result is declared and reported. Stages of the DNA analysis are also conducted in different buildings at our premises for added analytical security.

SureScreen Scientifics Ltd is ISO9001 accredited and participates in Natural England's proficiency testing scheme for GCN eDNA testing.

Interpretation of Results

Sample Integrity Check:	When samples are received in the laboratory, they are inspected for any tube leakage, suitability of sample (not too much mud or weed etc.) and absence of any factors that could potentially lead to inconclusive results. Any samples which fail this test are rejected and eliminated before analysis.
Degradation Check:	Pass/Fail. Analysis of the spiked DNA marker to see if there has been degradation of the kit or sample between the date it was made to the date of analysis. Degradation of the spiked DNA marker may lead indicate a risk of false negative results.
Inhibition Check:	Pass/Fail. The presence of inhibitors within a sample is assessed using a DNA marker. If inhibition is detected, samples are purified and re-analyzed. Inhibitors cannot always be removed, if the inhibition check fails, the sample should be re-collected.
Result:	Presence of GCN eDNA (Positive/Negative/Inconclusive) Positive: GCN DNA was identified within the sample, indicative of GCN presence within the sampling location at the time the sample was taken or within the recent past at the sampling location. Positive Replicates: Number of positive qPCR replicates out of a series of 12. If one or more of these are found to be positive the pond is declared positive for GCN presence. It may be assumed that small fractions of positive analyses suggest low level presence, but this cannot currently be used for population studies. In accordance with the WC1067 Natural England protocol, even a score of 1/12 is declared positive. 0/12 indicates negative GCN presence. Negative: GCN eDNA was not detected or is below the threshold detection level and the test result should be considered as evidence of GCN absence, however, does not exclude the potential for GCN presence below the limit of detection. Inconclusive: Controls indicate inhibition or degradation of the sample, resulting in the inability to provide conclusive evidence for GCN presence or absence.

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Appendix E- Wildlife friendly planting

Wildlife Friendly Planting (Natural England, 2008. Gardening with Wildlife in Mind. London: Natural England)

Native and wildlife friendly shrubs

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Wayfaring tree	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>
Shrubby cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
Raspberry	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>
Alder buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>
Barberry	<i>Berberis × stenophylla</i>
Barberry	<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>
Bell heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>
Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>
Black currant	<i>Ribes nigrum</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>
Butcher's-broom	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>
Cowberry	<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>
Cross-leaved heath	<i>Erica tetralix</i>
New Zealand holly	<i>Olearia macrodonta</i>
Daphne	<i>Daphne odora</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Field rose	<i>Rosa arvensis</i>
Firethorn	<i>Pyracanthus angustifolia</i>
Flowering Currant	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>
Gooseberry	<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>
Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty'	<i>Hebe</i> sp.
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Japanese quince	<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i>
Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>

Mexican orange	<i>Choisya ternata</i>
Mezereon	<i>Daphne mezereum</i>
Midland hawthorn	<i>Crataegus laevigata</i>
Osier	<i>Salix viminalis</i>
Portugal laurel	<i>Prunus lusitanica</i>
Privet	<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>
Purple willow	<i>Salix purpurea</i>
Snowy mespilus	<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i> , <i>Amelanchier lamarckii</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>
Spurge laurel	<i>Daphne laureola</i>
Sweet briar	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>

Native and wildlife-friendly trees

Common Name	Scientific Name
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>
Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i> agg.
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>
Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Large-leaved lime	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>
Small-leaved lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>
Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Sweet chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Wild service-tree	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>