



GREAT CRESTED NEWT PRECAUTIONARY MITIGATION REPORT FOR:

Little Hollybush,
West Hoathly Rd,
East Grinstead,
RH19 4NE

For: **Mr. Harold Burr**
Little Hollybush

Issued by: **Wychwood Environmental Ltd**
www.wychwoodenvironmental.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Wychwood Environmental Ltd undertook a Preliminary Ecological Assessment to support planning application number DM/26/0859 at the proposed development site at: Little Hollybush, West Hoathly Rd, East Grinstead, RH19 4NE. The LPA has requested further information with regards to great crested newts. This report provides information to demonstrate that the impacts to great crested newts can be mitigated within the current design scheme, should they be present in the immediate area.

Impacts

In the absence of mitigation measures the development has the potential to impact great crested newts, if they are present in ponds within 250m, in the following ways:

- Terrestrial habitat loss
- Habitat fragmentation
- Risk to individual newts at the construction phase
- Risk to individual newts post-development

In the absence of mitigation it is possible that an offence could occur in relation to great crested newts.

Mitigation

The four main areas of potential impacts outlined above can be mitigated by careful design and provision of mitigation and management measures during all stages of development.

- Habitat loss has been minimised through careful design with loss/damage of 0.025Ha of poor quality habitat which is likely to be a temporary loss and the long term provision of improved connectivity around the site.
- The protection and enhancement of the hedgerows and tree-lines on the southern and western edges of the site will ensure there are no significant barriers and newts and other wildlife can access all parts of the site and surrounding areas.
- Measures to protect individual newts during the construction phase including, supervised site clearance and tool box talks to contractors will mitigate the risks.
- Risk to individual newts through drainage can be mitigated through a newt-friendly drainage scheme.

Conclusion

The provision of mitigation makes it unlikely that development proposals would result in a significant impact to great crested newts and the proposals will not have a significant impact on the favourable conservation status to great crested newts if they are present in the local ponds.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Wychwood Environmental Ltd was initially instructed to conduct an Ecological Assessment (PEA) to assess the possible presence of great crested newts at: Little Hollybush, West Hoathly Rd, East Grinstead, RH19 4NE.

1.2 This survey was undertaken to inform a planning application at the site for extensions and alterations to the existing house. The development area of the site is provided within Figures 1-3 and shows the wider area (redline) which is also owned by the client but is not impacted by the proposed development proposals of this application.

1.3 A Consultee comment has been received by Mid Sussex District Council for Planning application number DM/26/0859 (response dated 11/06/2026). This LPA requested further information in relation to great crested newts (GCN) as the site falls within a “red impact risk zone”. It is stated that “Impact risk zones have been derived through advanced modelling to create a species distribution map which predicts likely presence. In the red impact zone, there is suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence.” It has been requested that:

- *No development shall take place until a Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS) detailing reasonable avoidance measures for great crested newts has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Works shall only be undertaken in accordance with the approved Method Statement.*

Reason: In order to ensure that adverse impacts on great crested newts are adequately mitigated and to ensure that site works are delivered in full compliance with the organisational licence (WML-OR177, or a 'Further Licence'), section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

1.4 There are no ponds on site but there are two ponds as marked on MAGIC Maps within 50m of the site, and access was made possible to inspect the ponds. Some of the habitats within the plot have potential to be used by great crested newts as terrestrial

habitat, but the place where the extension will be built has no potential to be used by great crested newts. The existing access drive and the connection habitats between the site and the ponds will not be altered apart from potentially a small section of about 2 meters of hedge. No eDNA testing was undertaken as the ponds are not directly impacted.

- 1.5 The proposals will have minimal impact on habitats other than buildings and hardstanding and all habitats to be impacted / altered are located at least 50m away from the ponds. This will help ensure that the development proposals do not negatively impact the favourable conservation status of this species (if they are locally present). This report will highlight the precautionary mitigation measures to protect great crested newts at all stages of the development if a precautionary approach is taken and an assumption that great crested newts could be present in all of the ponds within 250m is taken.
- 1.6 This report will outline the mitigation and enhancement measures included in the proposals to provide sufficient information for the Local Planning Authority and their consultees to be able to determine that the proposals will have no long-term negative impacts on the great crested newt population in the local area as a result of these proposals.



Figure 1. Property location (red outline) - Google Maps.

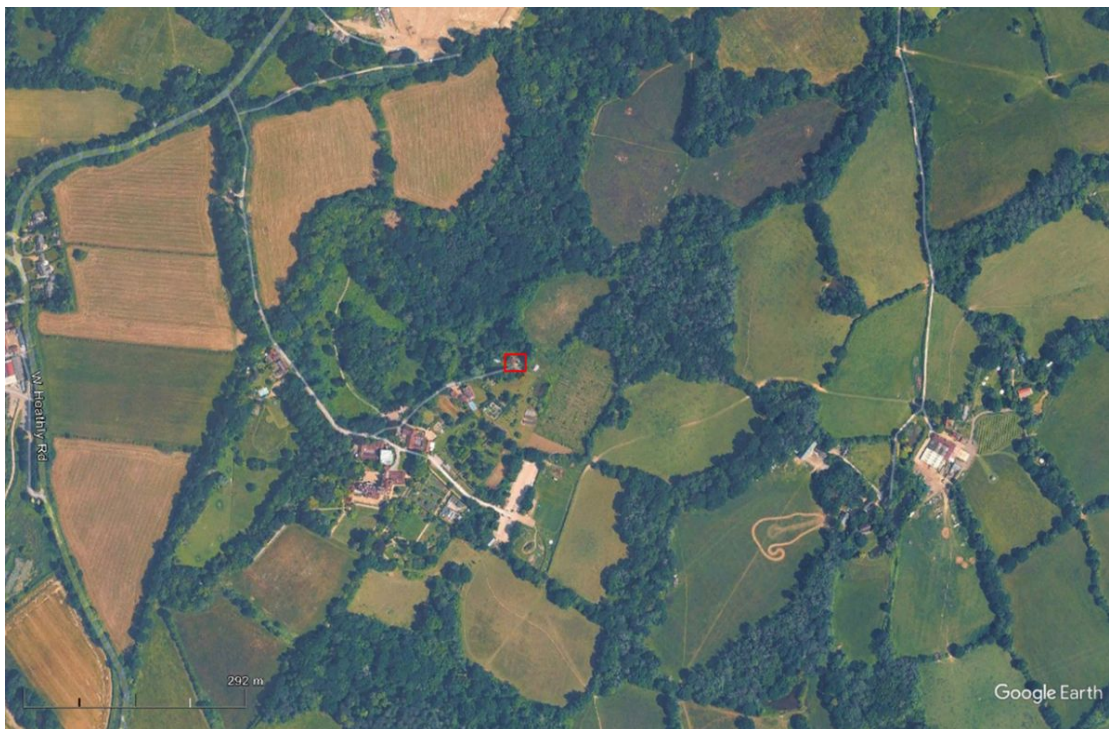


Figure 2. Google maps screen grab of the property, showing the location in the context of the wider landscape.

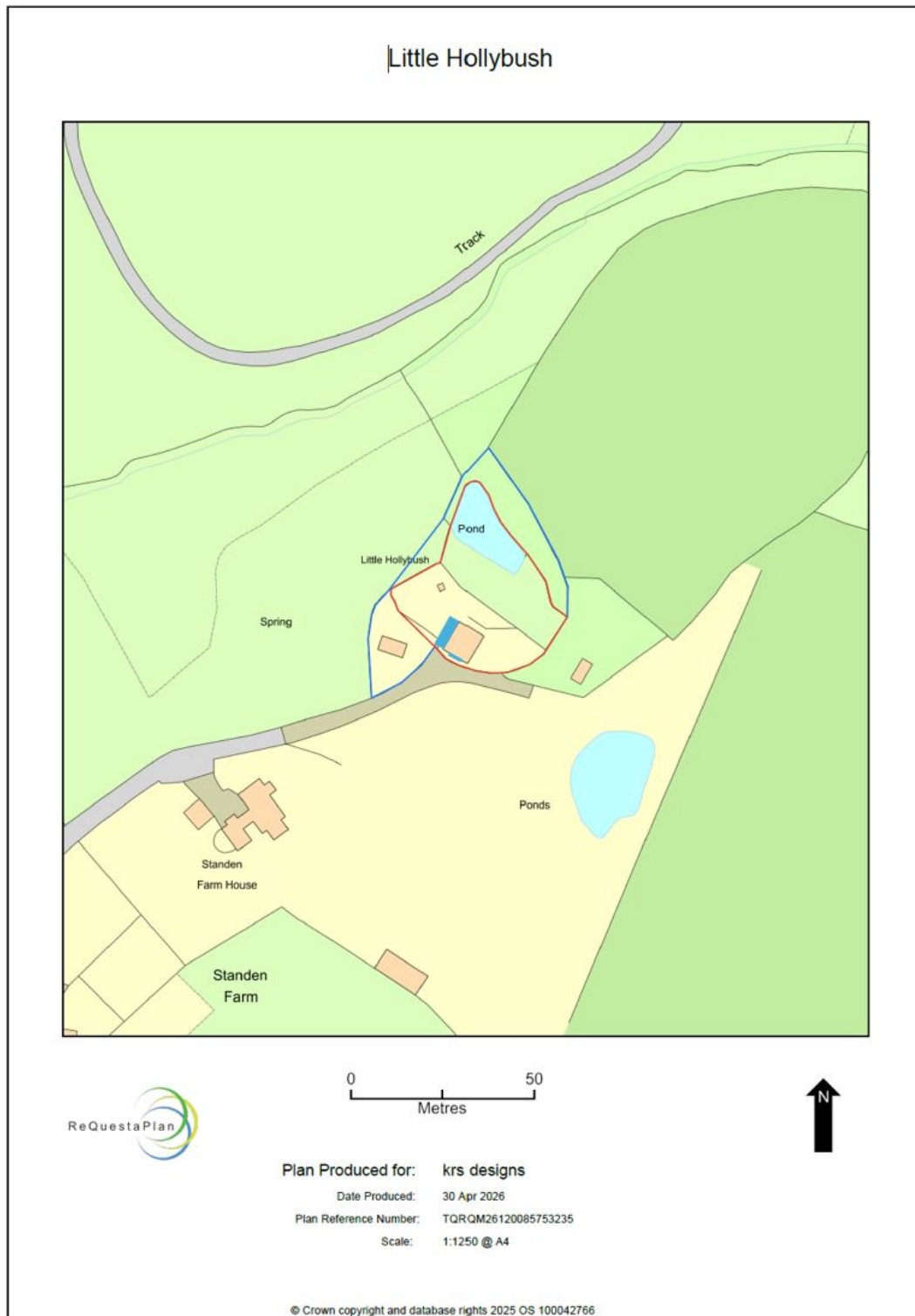


Figure 3. Redline Boundary of proposed development site. The approximate location and scale of the development is indicated (blue).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 2.1 An assessment of the area for its potential to support great crested newts was undertaken using data held within the dataset of MAGIC¹, a mapping service provided by Natural England and Nature Space maps².

Field Survey

- 2.2 The information collected during this assessment and subsequent desk study information was used to carry out a Habitat Suitability Index assessment (ARG UK 2010) on the two marked ponds close to the site and assess the terrestrial habitat on site and in the immediate surroundings.

3.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

- 3.1 The desk study did not find any records of great crested newts within 500m of the proposed development site in records held by MAGIC's great crested newt European Protected Species Licencing, class licence returns and 'Great Crested Newt Pond Surveys 2017 – 2019' (Figure 4, below). This may be due to an absence of the species within the immediate area or due to a lack of records. However, records of great crested newts within the wider area including around Hailsham indicated that there is a great crested newt population present in the wider area. Records are held for great crested newts to the north, south, east and west of the site within 5km of the proposed development site. The closest record held within the MAGIC dataset was 0.57km to the south of the development site. The site falls within the 'Red zone' from the Nature Space impact risk zone maps which denotes: 'highly suitable habitat – the most important areas for great crested newts'.

¹ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

² <https://naturespaceuk.com/district-licensing/impact-map/>

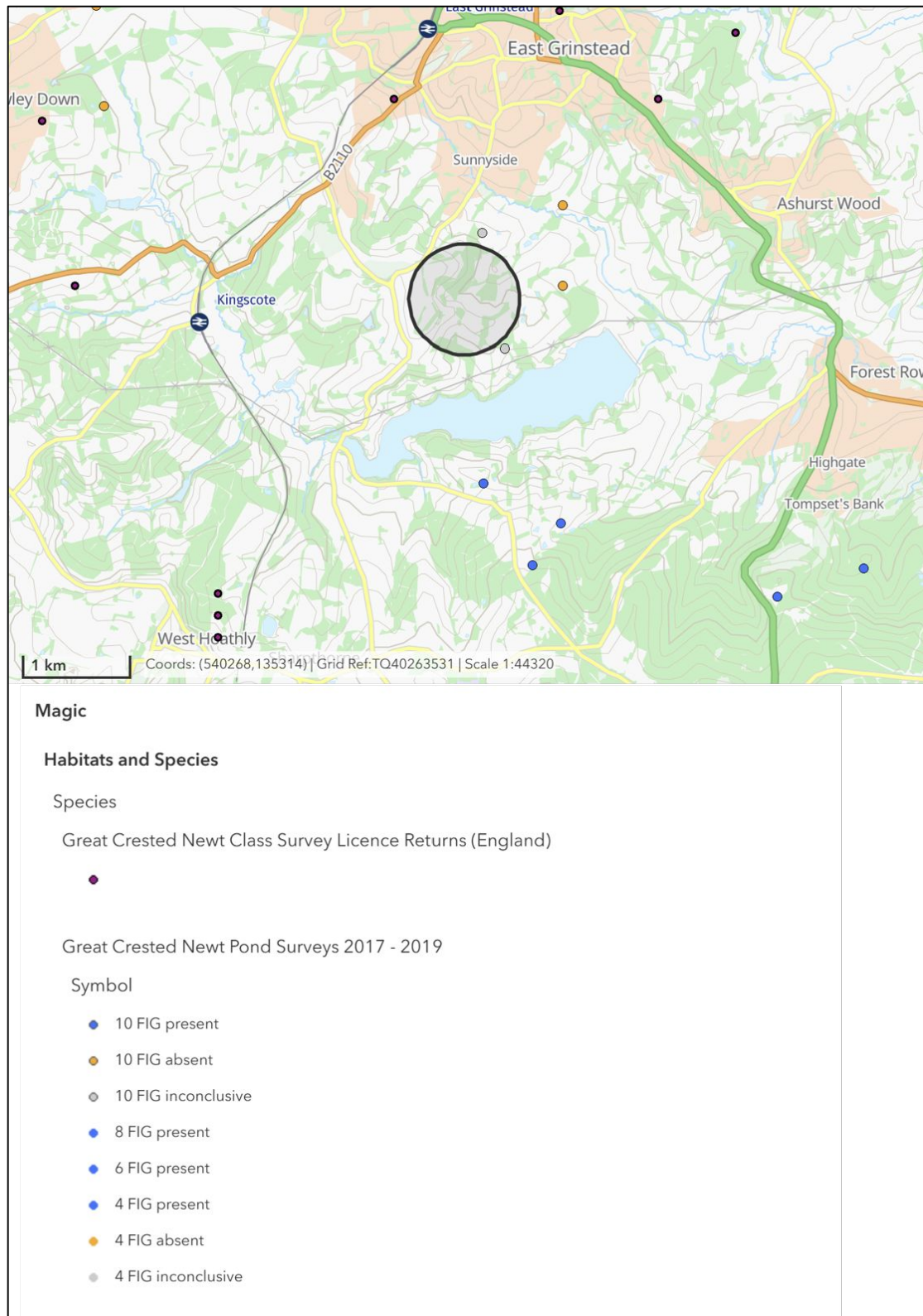


Figure 4. Location of development site with 500m buffer zone shown in black with records for great crested newts shown (see legend). (Image taken from MAGIC).

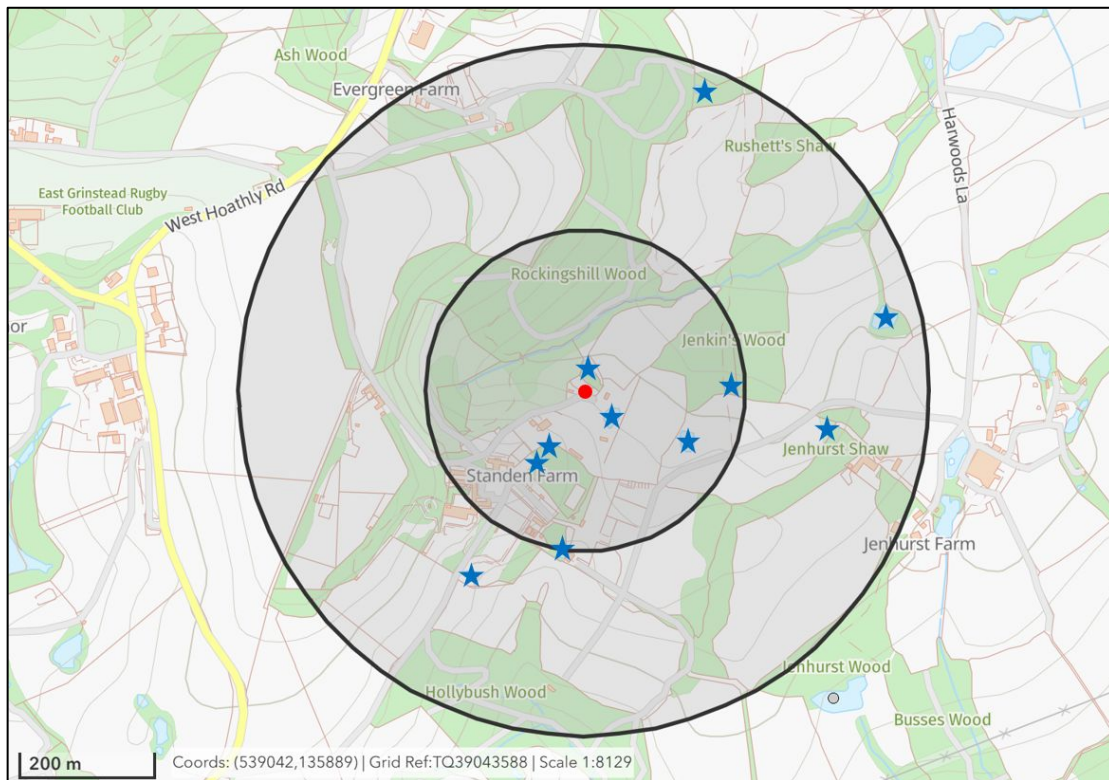


Figure 5. Location of ponds (blue stars) within 500m (outer buffer) and 250m (inner buffer zone) of the development site boundary. The property is marked (red dot) (Image taken from MAGIC).

3.2 Use of Magic maps identified a number of ponds located within 250m and 500m of the proposed development site boundary (Figure 5). Eleven ponds are present within 500m of the development site boundary, not taking into account that a number of these ponds may have barriers to dispersal such as roads limiting newt access to the site or where these are unsuitable for great crested newts to use as breeding ponds. Within 250m of the proposed development a total of six ponds are present. The two closest ponds were inspected. The closest pond is the pond in a neighbouring garden to the southeast and is approximately 50m to the north of where works will take place. There is a mown field and a gravel track in the intervening area between this pond and the development site. There is a closer pond 16m north from the site marked on the map, however upon inspection this pond was empty and is only seasonally holding a shallow area of water in periods of high rainfall.

Field Study

- 3.3 The initial walkover survey at the site found that there were a few areas of terrestrial habitat within the redline boundary which could support great crested newts. Figure 6 provides a map showing the habitats present on site and Photographs 1- 6 provide additional information on the structure of the habitat on site to illustrate its general unsuitability to support great crested newts.
- 3.4 The majority of the site consisted of vegetated garden habitats consisting of amenity grassland, planted shrubs and patches of ruderal vegetation (Photograph 1 - 6). There is a hedge line close to the western boundary that is close to the development. The borders to west and north and east are enclosed by deciduous bordering woodland. Amphibians and reptiles could ingress from the habitats to site. Amphibians including great crested newts and reptiles may occur in the hedgerow on the western boundary (Photograph 6). However, the habitats directly impacted by the extension works are hardstanding and amenity grassland.
- 3.5 There are no ponds on site. Two ponds close to the site, one to the north and one to the southeast of the site (Figure 3) were assessed for their potential to support breeding great crested newts. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) of the ponds were undertaken using MAGIC maps to assess locate ponds within the area. The HSI scores provided in the table below (Table 1) were assessed according to the advice in ARG UK (2010) and Oldham et al. (2000). This assessment provides an average score for the pond's suitability to support great crested newts.
- 3.6 In summary, great crested newt records are present within the wider area with the closest record located approximately 570m south of the proposed development site. Eleven ponds are found within 500m of the development. The pond to the north of the site was assessed as having a below average potential to support great crested newts. The pond to the southeast of the site was also assessed as having an average potential to support great crested newts. The habitat on site where the works are proposed is unsuitable for great crested newts (buildings, hardstanding and amenity grassland) or poor quality with limited structure and a lack of refugia. However, the hedgerows on site do provide some habitat which could be used by great crested newts. Given that there is potential for great crested newts to be present in the area

and using a pond within close proximity to the development it is proposed to take a precautionary approach with regards to mitigation measures. The potential impacts are based on an assumption that great crested newts could be present nearby and thus a robust mitigation strategy is required. This is discussed in section 4 below.

	Pond Name Grid Ref	<i>Example</i> SK123456	Hollybush Pond - north	Hollybush Pond - southeast
SI No	SI Description	<i>SI Value</i>	SI Value	SI Value
1	Geographic location	1.00	1	1
2	Pond area	0.50	0.25	0.3
3	Pond permanence	0.90	0.1	0.9
4	Water quality	1.00	0.33	1
5	Shade	1.00	0.2	1
6	Water fowl effect	1.00	1	0.67
7	Fish presence	1.00	1	0.67
8	Pond Density	0.65	1	1
9	Terrestrial habitat	1.00	1	1
10	Macrophyte cover	0.90	0.3	1
HSI Score		0.88	0.47	0.81
Pond suitability (see below)		Excellent		
Categorisation of HSI Score by Lee Brady				
HIS Score		Pond Suitability		
< 0.50		Poor		
0.50 - 0.59		Below average		
0.60 - 0.69		Average		
0.70 - 0.79		Good		
> 0.80		Excellent		
Based on ARGUK advice note 5 - Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index				

Table 1. Habitat Suitability Index criteria for Ponds close to the site.

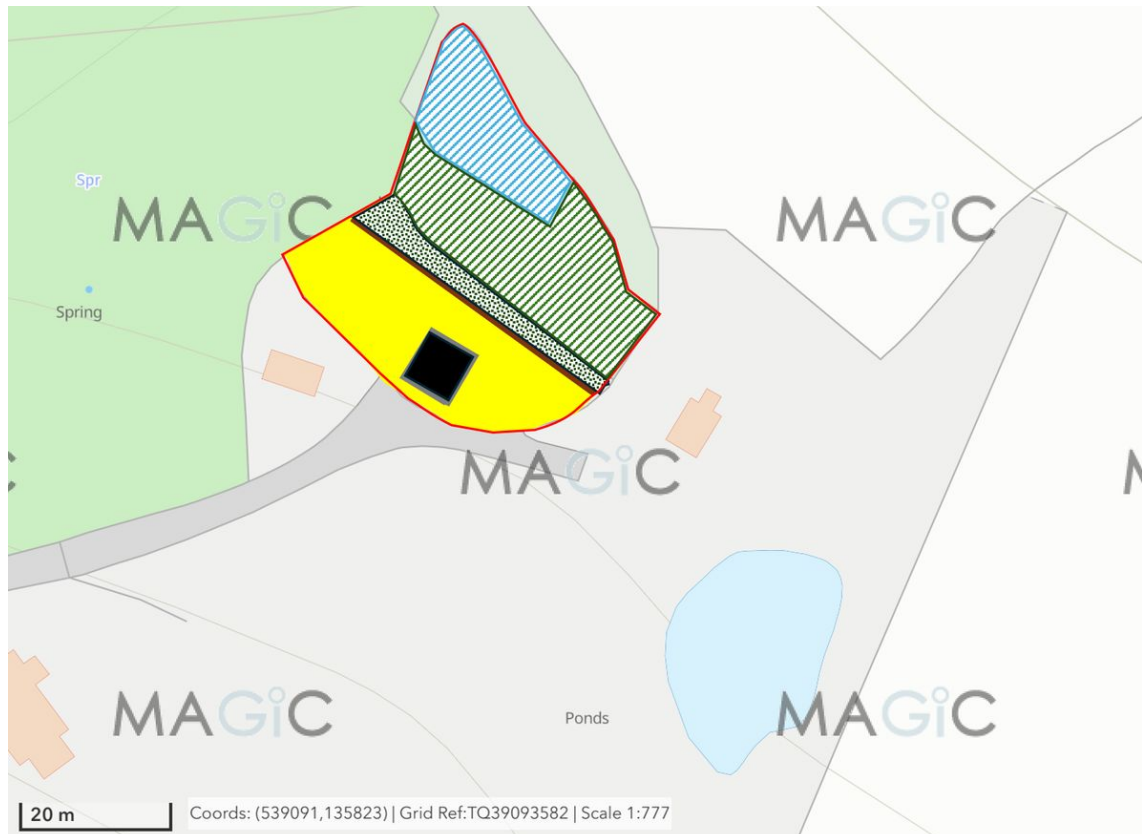


Figure 6. Modified site plan, showing the numbered buildings and main habitats on site: Buildings – black, hardstanding – grey, wall – brown line, vegetated garden - yellow, shrubs and small trees – green shading, hedge-line – dark green, pond - blue, empty/ephemeral pond – blue hatching, permanent pond – solid blue, deciduous woodland – green hatching.



Photo 1: The northwest facing (front) elevation of the property.



Photo 2: The southeast facing elevation of the property.



Photo 3: The southeast and northeast elevation of the property.



Photo 4: The southwest facing elevation of the property.



Photo 5: The northeast facing elevation of the property where the extension will be attached.



Photo 6: The west elevation, the approximate location of the new extension is indicated (blue shading).



Photo 7: The northern pond as marked has drained due to a perforated lining.



Photo 8: The south eastern pond is permanently filled.



Photo 9: The intervening land between the site and the southeast pond is mostly mown semi-improved grassland.



Photo 10: The garden of the property and the area to be impacted by the proposed works (blue shading).

4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 4.1 If a precautionary approach is taken with regards to great crested newts in the area and assuming that the pond closest (50m southeast of the works area) is used by breeding great crested newts, an assessment of the worst-case scenario potential impacts can be evaluated. This includes impacts during site clearance and the construction phase as well as post-development impacts.

Construction Phase Impacts

- 4.2 With no mitigation in place, there will be no anticipated impacts on great crested newt breeding or non-breeding ponds as there are no aquatic habitats within the application site. The proposals will have no direct or indirect impacts on any ponds within 250m of the development site.
- 4.3 The development will impact one small area of potential GCN habitat marked as yellow. There are other areas with potential for terrestrial phases of GCN on site but will not be affected by the development (pink hatching). These are mapped in Figure 7 below.
- 4.4 If no consideration to maintaining habitats suitable for great crested newts had been made at the design phase then there could have been loss of all suitable terrestrial habitat around the boundaries of the site. At the boundary tree-lines and the hedgerows will be protected, maintained and enhanced. However, a very small area of hedge-line and a patch of ruderal will be impacted during the construction phase (see Figure 7). Apart from the 4m extension on the western elevation no other area of the house and garden will be affected by the works.

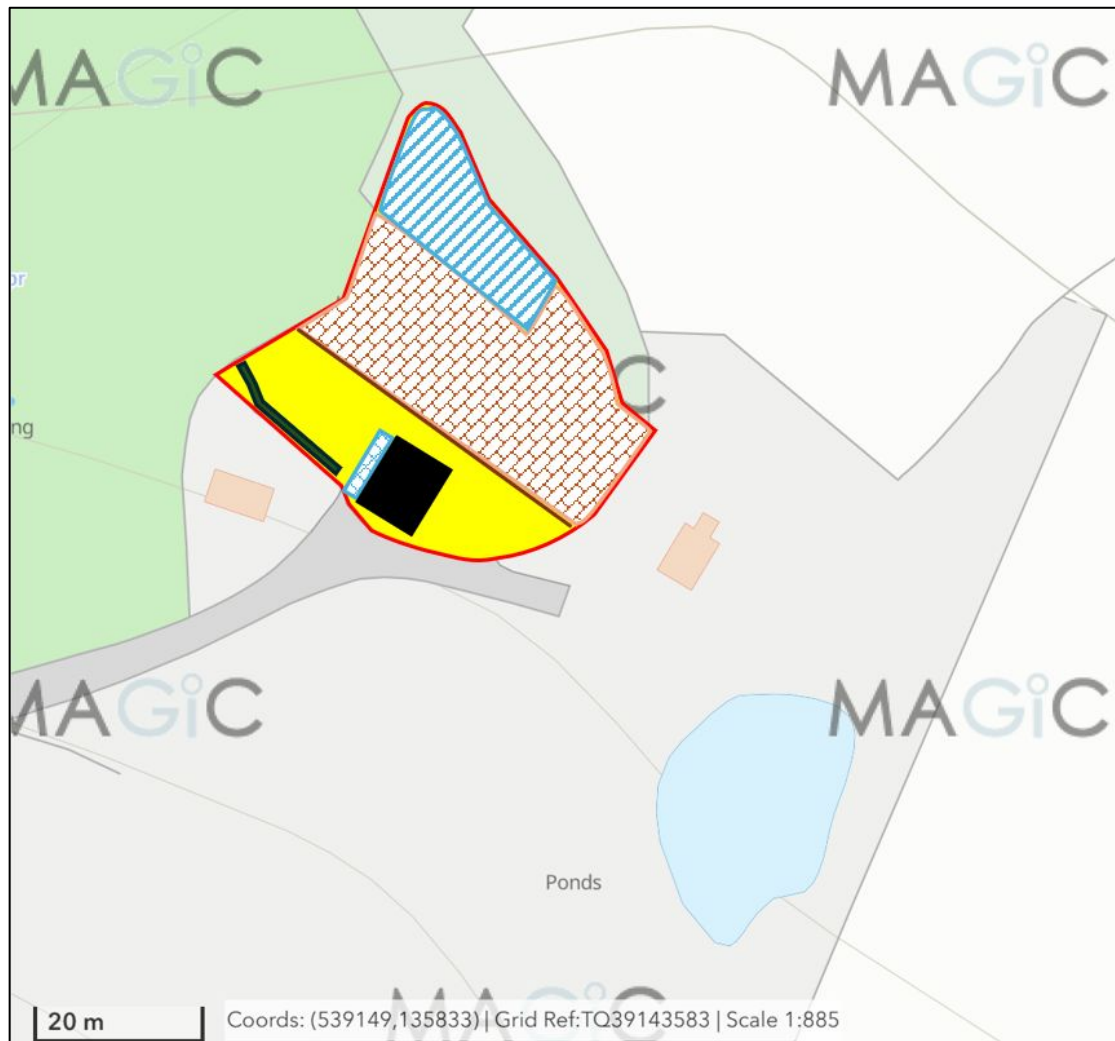


Figure 7. Application site impacts for great crested newts: Yellow shading – vegetated garden impacted by the works; Blue dotted shading- areas with alterations planned; Black shapes - areas with no suitable habitat (buildings and hardstanding) – no impact: Pink shading - area that has some suitability for great crested newts – no impact.

- 4.5 In the absence of mitigation, there are some risks to individual newts during the construction phase of the development when there could be clearance of a small area habitats close to the site. Mitigation measures to reduce the risk of activities during construction are provided in Section 5 of this report.

Post-Development Impacts

- 4.6 The main potential impact to great crested newts in the absence of mitigation would be the loss of small section of vegetated garden, however this a low potential habitat. Habitat suitable for foraging, commuting and resting newts around the edge of the site will be retained throughout the development.

- 4.7 An additional potential post-development impact, in the absence of mitigation, is habitat fragmentation where hard standing, buildings and other infrastructure limits newts' access across the site. The protection and enhancement of boundary habitat around the site have been included within the design to ensure this is not an impact and is discussed in Section 5.

Risk Assessment

- 4.8 Natural England as part of their great crested newt European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) method statement, provide a generic risk assessment to help consultants and their clients assess the risk of an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2017. This calculator was used to for the development site in the light of no mitigation measures to identify the main risks so that measures to reduce the impacts can be employed. For this assessment, no aquatic habitats will be lost as a result of the proposals. The whole area of the site works falls within 30-50m of the nearest pond (Figure 7). The size of the habitat to be lost within 250m of the pond is sufficient for the site to fall within a green - risk of an offence unlikely and adding in the risk to potential newts puts this risk at low risk of creating an offence (green).

Table 2: Risk Assessment of Development in the Absence of Any Mitigation

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)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.05
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.05
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

- 4.9 The risk assessment states for a green risk- offence where a "Green: offence highly unlikely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that it is highly unlikely any offence would be committed should the development proceed. Therefore, no licence would be required. However, bearing in mind that this is a generic assessment, you should carefully examine your specific

plans to ensure this is a sound conclusion, and take precautions (see Non-licensed avoidance measures tool) to avoid offences if appropriate. It is likely that any residual offences would have negligible impact on conservation status, and enforcement of such breaches is unlikely to be in the public interest (Natural England 2014).

- 4.10 Section 5 of this report sets out the mitigation measures proposed within the scheme design and construction phase measures to minimise the risk of impacts to great crested newts.

5.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

- 5.1 Given the strict legal protection that great crested newts receive under the Habitats Regulations 2017, the following recommendations should be implemented to ensure that no offences occur. The mitigation measures are split into design phase mitigation which has already been incorporated into the scheme and the construction and post-development phase mitigation, and management measures which can be conditioned if planning permission is granted.
- 5.2 **Loss of terrestrial habitat** was identified as a potential impact for great crested newts if they are present within the immediate area. The site does not contain large areas of high quality habitat but the hedgerows and tree-lines on the western and northern boundaries had some potential to be used by great crested newts. These habitats will be retained within the design scheme and will be protected during the construction phase. Heras fencing or similar is being installed for root protection measures to ensure that there are no incursions into these habitats by machinery, storage of material or by contractors. There may also be some loss of about 2 meters the hedge closest to the development. Any loss of the terrestrial refugia habitat on site if the small section of the hedge is cleared can be off-set by the provision of a new refugia which could be provided within the corners of the development site. Careful slow and methodical clearance of potential habitat will allow amphibians to easily move to adjacent habitats.
- 5.3 **Habitat fragmentation** can occur when developments create barriers such as roads, large areas of hard standing and buildings between areas of habitat that great crested newts could use. There will be no fragmentation with the development proposals looking to develop on hard-standing, and short sward semi-improved grassland. The retention of boundary hedgerows across the site and the provision of new native hedgerow will ensure there is no loss of connectivity across the site.
- 5.4 **Risks to individual newts during construction** may result in death and or injury if no mitigation was in place. The risk is lower than it might be in some sites as the majority of the site is very short grassland with few areas of rough ground where newts could hide and it is not anticipated that newts would regularly use this short grassland or

the hard-standing and buildings where the development is proposed if they are present in the immediate area. However, there is a minor risk of injury or death to individual newts during clearance of habitat where newts could be sheltering. This includes the clearance of the wooden post piles. These measures would also help protect individual newts if they are present and include:

- A tool box talk will be provided to all contractors working at the site prior to works beginning and full details on what to do if a protected species is found.
- In the small areas of optimal habitat loss, e.g. the wooden post pile removal, the removal of refugia will be supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- There are not anticipated to be deep excavations during construction, but all excavations will be covered overnight to ensure no animals can become trapped.
- Any stored materials or debris should be inspected for GCN when being moved or removed.
- Should any GCN be discovered prior to or during the development, work should stop immediately, and a licensed ecologist be called to site to advise.

5.5 The risk assessment that was undertaken in Section 4 (Table 2) can now be re-run with the results looking at the impacts when mitigation is put into place as outlined above and considering that the majority of the habitat is sub-optimal for newts.

Table 3: Risk Assessment of Development Accounting for Mitigation Measures

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)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.005
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

5.6 *The risk assessment tool states that: "Green: offence highly unlikely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that it is highly unlikely any offence would be committed should the development proceed. Therefore, no licence would be required. However, bearing in mind that this is a generic*

assessment, you should carefully examine your specific plans to ensure this is a sound conclusion, and take precautions (see Non-licensed avoidance measures tool) to avoid offences if appropriate. It is likely that any residual offences would have negligible impact on conservation status, and enforcement of such breaches is unlikely to be in the public interest."

- 5.7 It is therefore likely that, based on the mitigation outlined above, the potential impacts to newts can be managed to minimise the negative impacts, if great crested newts are present within ponds within 250m. By managing the impacts at all stages of the development and through a sensitive design, the proposals are unlikely to have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of great crested newts in the local area. These mitigation measures are all achievable having already been incorporated into the design or be overseen by an ecologist on site.

6.0 REFERENCES

ARG UK (2010) ARG Advice Note 5- Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index. Available online at <https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/advice-notes/9-great-crested-newt-habitat-suitability-index-arg-advice-note-5/file> (Accessed March 2022)

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