



**PROTECTED SPECIES PRECAUTIONARY
WORKING MEASURES REPORT**

MR BEASLEY

LAND AT FEN PLACE
EAST STREET
TURNERS HILL
WEST SUSSEX
RH10 4QQ

29TH JULY 2026

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1. SUMMARY OF STRATEGY

1.1 Mr Beasley has commissioned CT Ecology to draft a practical mitigation solution for great crested newts, hazel dormouse and reptiles, to be implemented at land south of Fen Place Mill, in order to discharge a series of conditions with the associated planning consent in place for the site (Ref: DM/23/1608). The associated conditions are detailed below:

- * *Condition 7:* Prior to commencement a Non-Licensed Great Crested Newt and reptile Precautionary Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This will contain precautionary mitigation measures and/or works to reduce potential impacts to Great Crested Newt and reptiles during the construction phase. The measures and/works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.
- * *Condition 8:* Prior to commencement a Non-Licensed Hazel Dormouse Precautionary Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This will contain precautionary mitigation measures and/or works to reduce potential impacts to Hazel Dormouse during the construction phase. The measures and/works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.
- * *Condition 11:* Prior to the works commencing a precautionary working method statement provided by a suitably qualified ecologist shall be submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority.

1.2 The precautionary measures have been compiled based on details provided in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site, undertaken in 2022 (Urban Edge Environmental Consulting). The following points summarise the project background and the strategy itself.

- * Proposals comprise construction of a new dwelling which will occupy a small footprint within the grassland field, with access extending through the woodland, occupying an existing access track. The majority of the grassland field and associated boundary features and woodland will be retained.
- * This report comprises a series of precautionary working measures to ensure the proposed site clearance works and re-development at the site do not pose a risk to hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), or great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*); both of which are European Protected Species, as well as widespread reptiles, which may potentially be present.

- * It is considered that the chances of these species being present within the working areas is low due to the small scale of the works together with the poor vegetation structure. However, a precautionary approach is recommended as these species have either been recorded in the wider locality and/or potentially suitable habitat is present within the site. This document outlines all reasonable measures to reduce the risks of contravening legislation.
- * The application site comprises a grassland field, together with boundary woodland and hedgerows.
- * This report sets out a methodology comprised of sensitive timing and the use of habitat manipulation methods, to be followed by on-site contractors in order to avoid any potential impact to protected species.

2. MITIGATION MEASURES

Approach

- 2.1 The recommended mitigation solution is to ensure that protected species are deterred from the footprint of works by displacing into adjacent retained habitat using a process of habitat manipulation, making the working areas sub-optimal for use by these species throughout the works.

Site Description

- 2.2 Fen Place is within a rural location, in the north-east extent of Turners Hill. The application site is within the southern extent of the wider estate, accessed from East Street to the south-west. In the immediate environs, grazed fields extend to the north, east and west with woodland beyond B2110, Turners Hill Road to the south. The river Medway is approximately 20m to the east of the application boundary.
- 2.3 In the wider area, managed gardens associated with the wider Fen Place estate together with a series of lakes are to the north with residential curtilages, scattered farmsteads and agricultural fields extending in all other directions.
- 2.4 The application site comprises a grassland field, together with boundary woodland and hedgerows. The survey area extended over 6ha and the British National Grid for the centre of the site is TQ363 363.
- 2.5 Potentially suitable reptile habitat is restricted to the woodland which may provide over-wintering opportunities for grass snake, due to connectivity to a network of ponds in the wider area. The grassland field was well-managed and the structural diversity required by widespread reptiles for basking, foraging and hibernating were absent.

- 2.6 The development area is located within a red impact risk zone for great crested newt as part of the Mid Sussex Council District Level Licencing (DLL) Scheme. This risk category indicates that suitable habitat is present in the locality and this species is likely to be present based on land-use and survey data held for the area. A small pond was recorded within the site during the 2022 assessment however this was more of a temporary wet depression at the time of the 2026 assessment in March and was completely dry in June 2026. There are four ponds within 250m of the site; located approximately 15m to the west; 40m to the south; 170m north and 180m north. Three of these ponds; located to the north and west were subject to eDNA surveys in 2026. These all returned a negative result, reducing the potential for great crested newts to pass through the site however the site supports woodland and grassland which provide terrestrial habitat for this species, with over-wintering opportunities associated with the woodland. The site also forms part of a network of grazed fields and woodland which extend in all directions, providing connectivity for great crested newts to pass between the network of ponds in the wider landscape.
- 2.7 The woodland and southern boundary hedgerow provided potentially suitable hazel dormouse habitat with connectivity to woodland in the wider landscape to the north and east. These features supported a variety of food sources for hazel dormouse however the understorey within the woodland was patchy and sparse, reducing the suitability to some degree however the woodland was connected to more optimal woodland in the wider landscape.

Legislation

- 2.8 The following legislation is relevant to the proposed mitigation solution;
- * The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), which affords protection to individuals and the places they use for shelter and breeding- great crested newts and hazel dormouse receive protection under this legislation.
 - * Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – all UK reptile species are listed on Schedule 5 which prohibits their killing or injury.

Timing

- 2.9 All works described below in relation to reptiles and great crested newts will be carried out in the period between April and mid-October in suitable weather conditions, avoiding any rain with temperatures between 10°C and 20°C. Timing works within this period will avoid the reptile hibernation period and any possible aestivation¹ periods during extended spells of hot weather, both are which are periods when these species groups are considered most vulnerable.

¹ Some reptile and amphibian species may enter periods of torpor during extended periods of particularly high temperatures

- 2.10 Works described below in relation to hazel dormouse will be undertaken in two stages. The first to reduce any above ground vegetation associated with the woodland will be undertaken between November and the end of February to avoid impacting upon breeding birds with the second phase, as required, to include stump removal will be undertaken between May and September.
- 2.11 The actions listed below will be carried out prior to the construction works commencing and maintained in the lead-up to construction.
- 2.12 The extents of clearance will be restricted solely to the exact footprint required for the surfacing of the new driveway and construction footprint for the new house, to include site compound area with adjacent woodland, grassland and hedgerows being retained and left intact.

Fencing

- 2.13 Suitable construction fencing (HerrasTM or similar must be installed between the working area and the retained adjacent habitats to ensure materials and machinery do not encroach beyond the working area.

Great Crested Newt

Current Status

- 2.14 The site forms part of a network of grazed fields and woodland which extend in all directions, providing connectivity for great crested newts to pass between the network of ponds in the wider landscape although the river Medway to the east serves to create a significant barrier to dispersal by great crested newts in this direction.
- 2.15 An environmental DNA (eDNA) assessment was undertaken in relation to three out of the four ponds within a 250m radius. The ponds subject to eDNA surveys were located 15m to the west; 170m north and 180m north. The depression within the site was dry at the time of the eDNA surveys. The pond 40m to the south could not be accessed. The eDNA assessment returned a negative result for all of the surveyed ponds. An absence of great crested newts in ponds to the north and west and the river Medway creating a barrier to dispersal to the east serves to significantly reduce the potential for this species to pass through on-site habitats. However, due to the location within a red risk zone, the potential for a transient newt to pass through the site on occasion cannot be completely ruled out.

Data Search

- 2.16 The data search commissioned in 2026 (SxBRC 2026) returned 28 recent records for great crested newt a 2km radius. The closest record was over 1.4km to the north from 2019, relating to a positive eDNA result from a pond.

- 2.17 A single great crested newt PSML was returned within a 1km radius; located 1km to the west from 2017 pertaining to damage to a resting place.
- 2.18 The development area is located within a red impact risk zone for great crested newt as part of the Mid Sussex Council District Level Licencing (DLL) Scheme. This risk category indicates that suitable habitat is present in the locality and this species is likely to be present based on land-use and survey data held for the area.

Potential Impacts of Vegetation Clearance

- 2.19 Based on the evaluation of all available data obtained from the desk study and data search and based on the field survey, the potential for this species to utilise on site habitats is significantly reduced however, due to the location of the site within a red risk zone, the potential for a transient newt to pass through the site on occasion cannot be completely ruled out.
- 2.20 Overall, without the implementation of RAMs, the possible effect on GCN is assessed as being low and impacts might include individual newts passing through the terrestrial boundary habitat on-site being disturbed by a) machinery pruning/felling trees and clearing scrub and grassland; 2) machinery undertaking ground excavations; 3) becoming trapped/crushed through seeking refuge under materials stored on the ground during construction.
- 2.21 These potential impacts would have legal implications, and there is a risk that all prohibited acts listed above may arise if the proposed works were to proceed without mitigation. The mitigation proposed in this report is designed to reduce to 'very unlikely' and where possible prevent these potential impacts. This strategy has been developed following careful review of the baseline conditions and project proposals.
- 2.22 The proposal will not serve to create a barrier to movement for great crested newt populations in future years with connectivity for this species being retained between the site and the wider landscape in the long-term; and the construction phase can be managed whereby any likely negative effects on great crested newt can be effectively removed.
- 2.23 Based on the above information, Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) in respect of great crested newt are considered appropriate and proportionate based on the current scope of works.
- 2.24 If RAMs are implemented, then the associated risks to this species can be removed and the effect on great crested newts is predicted to be; *no effect-negligible*.

The Strategy

- 2.25 The following strategy is designed to minimise the risk of triggering any of the offences outlined above, and follows currently available guidance. The mitigation strategy proposed here is described in the order that it would be implemented and includes limitation of works impacts, habitat manipulation within the works area and mitigation measures. When proposing these stages of the work, consideration is also given to other protected species, in order to ensure compliance with legislation. All of the activities listed below would be undertaken under the close supervision of a suitably experienced and licenced ecologist to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid impacts to great crested newts, and to adhere to legislation.
- 2.26 Due to small working footprint and limited potential for newts to pass through the working area, adopting a series of precautionary working measures will be sufficient to fully safeguard great crested newts in the unlikely event that any individuals pass through the area. These measures should include the following:

Habitat Clearance

- 2.27 The extent of clearance will be restricted solely to the exact footprint required for the surfacing of the new driveway and construction footprint for the new house, to include site compound area; with adjacent woodland, grassland and hedgerows being retained. Areas of grassland and woodland within the working footprint will be cut down to ground level in two stages². This must be undertaken in the active period taken to run between March and October inclusive.
- * Stage 1 - Using a hand-held strimmer, all vegetation within the working footprint (grass/ground level scrub/woodland ground flora) will be reduced to 200mm above ground level. A suitably experienced and licenced ecologist will oversee this process which will be undertaken in accordance with the hazel dormouse and reptile methodology detailed in this document;
 - * Stage 2 - Undertaken the following day and using the same tools as Stage 1, all remaining vegetation will be cut down to ground level and the arisings removed from the working area. A suitably experienced and licenced ecologist will oversee this process.

² The grassland field is subject to regular management so at the time of habitat manipulation commencing, it may only be possible to carry out the second stage of habitat clearance if the sward is already under 200mm at the time of the works.

Destructive Search

- * This process will be undertaken the following day after the second stage clearance (or where this is not possible the vegetation must be managed at ground level until the destructive search can commence). This will be undertaken using an excavator with toothed bucket under guidance from a suitably experienced and licenced newt ecologist.
- * The working footprint will be subject to a fingertip search prior to works commencing and the machine operator will be given a toolbox talk in relation to great crested newt (and other protected species detailed within this document). The destructive search will serve to remove the top soil from east to west through the working area. The ecologist will hand search any areas of wood/stacked arisings prior to removal. Where searching by hand is not possible, the machine will lift the debris for inspection. The debris will be relocated to the wider site. The top soil will be stacked on previously cleared ground to form wind-rows. These will be isolated from adjacent vegetation and left in situ for 24 hours to enable any displaced animals to escape. Specific locations for windrows will be decided by the ecologist at the time of the works.

Site Storage

- 2.28 All materials and machinery will be stored on areas of cleared ground or hardstanding either within the wider estate or within a dedicated site compound created for the works which should be located within the field. The potential for migration by great crested newts is considered reduced through the central grassland area. No barrier effects are predicted and any great crested newts can travel freely through the area should they choose to do so.
- 2.29 All stored materials will be raised off the ground on pallets or skids to further remove any refuge potential for great crested newts and aggregates such as gravel and sand must be delivered in bulk bags and stored on pallets to avoid creating potentially suitable 'refuge piles'.

Construction Phase

- 2.30 The materials for the development should be delivered in bulk bags and stored on pallets to avoid creating potentially suitable 'refuge piles'.
- 2.31 If any excavation work is required, trenches etc. must be back-filled overnight, if this isn't possible then earth ramps must be left in the trench(es) to allow animals, including great crested newts, to easily climb out and the contractor must inspect any excavations each morning to check that great crested newts are not present.

- 2.32 If any newts are found or suspected during the construction phase, then all activities must cease immediately and the project ecologist contacted for advice. An appropriate working methodology will need to be devised and this may include the need to obtain a great crested newt licence to enable activities to continue.
- 2.33 Any other species found during the site preparation phase will be removed from the site and relocated to suitable cover in the wider site.
- 2.34 If this strategy is followed and great crested newts are found during works, although unlikely, the works would need to cease and an appropriate licence would be required before works could continue.

Hazel Dormouse

Current Status

- 2.35 No survey has been carried out to establish whether dormice are present in the woodland on and adjacent to the site and it must therefore be assumed that there is potential for a small number of dormice to be present.

Data Search

- 2.36 The data search did not return any records for this species.

Potential Population Density for Dormice

- 2.37 The average population density for dormice in optimal habitat, pre-breeding, is 2-4 dormice per hectare (Bright et al., 2006). No woodland will be removed to facilitate the works however tree pruning will be required with potentially a small number of trees removed to facilitate the access and the habitat is sub-optimal, therefore the area is likely to comprise only a small proportion of an individual dormouse territory at worst.

Potential Impacts of Vegetation Clearance

- 2.38 No presence/absence survey has been carried out, so the absence of dormice cannot be guaranteed and therefore a series of mitigation measures will be followed as a precautionary approach. Worse case impacts, assuming dormice are present, as a result of tree pruning and potentially a small number of trees being removed, include the direct loss of dormouse habitat, and works may cause killing, injury or disturbance to dormice if undertaken without mitigation. No fragmentation or isolation of suitable habitat would occur as a result of the proposed works.

Legal Implications

- 2.39 The possible legal implications of the removal of this vegetation for dormice, before mitigation is implemented, include;
- * the potential to deliberately kill dormice; To damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a dormouse, to deliberately disturb a dormouse which is likely to impair their ability (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to nurture their young; or (ii) to hibernate; or the potential to disturb a dormouse whilst it is occupying a place of rest or shelter.
- 2.40 These potential impacts would have legal implications, and there is a risk that all prohibited acts listed above may arise if the proposed works were to proceed without mitigation. The mitigation proposed in this report is designed to reduce to 'very unlikely' and where possible prevent these potential impacts. This strategy has been developed following careful review of the baseline conditions and project proposals.
- 2.41 If mitigation is implemented, then the associated risks to this species can be removed and the effect on hazel dormouse is predicted to be; *no effect-negligible*.

The Strategy

- 2.42 The following strategy is designed to minimise the risk of triggering any of the offences outlined above, and follows currently available guidance. If this strategy is followed and dormice are found during works, although unlikely, the works would need to cease and an appropriate licence would be required before works could continue. This could delay works considerably as survey information, including population data, may be required before a licence application can be made to Natural England. Dormice surveys can only be undertaken when dormice are active, from April through to November.
- 2.43 The mitigation strategy proposed here is described in the order that it would be implemented and includes limitation of works impacts, habitat manipulation within the works area and mitigation works. When proposing all of these stages of the work, consideration is also given to other protected species including widespread breeding birds, in order to minimise disturbance to this species group and ensure compliance with legislation. All of the activities listed below would be undertaken under the close supervision of a suitably experienced and licenced ecologist to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid disturbance to dormice, and adhere to legislation.

Impact Limitation and Habitat Manipulation

- 2.44 Any trees/understorey within the woodland that will eventually be lost to accommodate the driveway will be subject to habitat manipulation.

- * Any trees/understorey likely to be impacted by the works will be carefully cut, using hand tools, to approximately 50cm above ground level. This must be carried out when dormice are hibernating and before birds start breeding i.e. prior to the end of February.
- * The cutting of vegetation to approximately 50cm above ground level will be undertaken in a sensitive manner using hand tools. No plant machinery or other vehicles will be driven off the existing track into the areas of adjacent woodland.
- * All branches will be lifted and carried from the works area without dragging. These methods will minimise understorey and ground disturbance and reduce the likelihood of disturbing hibernating dormice, reptiles and great crested newts. Smaller branches attached to large logs should be removed in order to remove potential bird nesting habitat.
- * Immediately prior to and during removal, any habitat potentially suitable for dormice within the works area will be extensively checked for dormice or evidence of dormice (e.g. ground level hibernation nests/old day nests in trees/scrub) by a licensed and suitably experienced ecologist. This will involve a 'fingertip search'. If dormice are found and disturbance cannot be avoided, works will cease and an appropriate licence i.e. a Protected Species Mitigation Licence (PSML) may need to be obtained.
- * The wider woodland canopy serves to provide dormice with a route of access from the development site to the woodland to the north and south.
- * The stumps of any trees as well as ground level cover including scrub must remain undisturbed until it is safe to assume dormice (and other target species) have emerged from hibernation. Dormice are expected to have emerged from hibernation by late May, and at that point will move to adjacent areas of retained vegetation, to the north and south of the working area. At this point the roots and root balls of any cut trees, where required, will be carefully pulled out using an excavator.

Reptiles

Current Status

- 2.45 No survey has been carried out to establish whether reptiles are present within the site. Although the grassland is considered sub-optimal and absence is likely due to on-going management of the grassland field, the woodland does provide potentially suitable hibernation opportunities particularly for grass snake due to the network of ponds in the wider locality (a requirement for this species for feeding), combined with the transient nature of grass snakes. It must therefore be assumed that there is potential for a small number of reptiles to be present within the woodland at certain times of the year.

Data Search

- 2.46 The data search returned a small number of recent (post 2011) records for grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) within a 2km radius. All records were over 500m from the site.

Potential Impacts of Vegetation Clearance

- 2.47 No presence/absence survey has been carried out, so the absence of widespread reptiles cannot be guaranteed and therefore a series of mitigation measures will be followed as a precautionary approach. Worse case impacts, assuming this species group are present, as a result of clearance works within the woodland, include the direct loss of hibernation/sheltering habitat, and works may cause killing and injury to reptiles if undertaken without mitigation. No fragmentation or isolation of suitable habitat would occur as a result of the proposed works.

Legal Implications

- 2.48 Widespread reptiles are protected against killing or injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 2.49 Potential impacts would have legal implications, and there is a risk that all prohibited acts listed above may arise if the proposed works were to proceed without mitigation. The mitigation proposed in this report is designed to reduce to 'very unlikely' and where possible prevent these potential impacts.
- 2.50 If mitigation is implemented, then the associated risks to this species can be removed and the effect on widespread reptiles is predicted to be; *no effect-negligible*.

The Strategy

- 2.51 The following strategy is designed to minimise the risk of triggering any of the offences outlined above, and follows currently available guidance. The mitigation strategy proposed here is described in the order that it would be implemented and includes limitation of works impacts, habitat manipulation within the works area and mitigation works. When proposing these stages of the work, consideration is also given to other protected species, in order to ensure compliance with legislation and this methodology is broadly in line with that proposed for great crested newts.
- 2.52 All of the activities listed below would be undertaken under the close supervision of a suitably experienced ecologist to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid killing or injury to reptiles, and adhere to legislation.

Habitat Manipulation

2.53 The extent of clearance will be restricted solely to the exact footprint required for the surfacing of the new driveway and construction footprint for the new house, to include site compound area; with adjacent woodland, grassland and hedgerows being retained and left intact. Areas of grassland and woodland within the working footprint will be cut down to ground level in two stages³. This must be undertaken in the active period taken to run between March and October inclusive.

- * Stage 1 - Using a hand-held strimmer, all vegetation within the working footprint (grass/ground level scrub/woodland ground flora) will be reduced to 200mm above ground level. A suitably experienced ecologist will oversee this process which will be undertaken in accordance with the hazel dormouse and great crested newt methodology detailed above;
- * Stage 2 - Undertaken the following day and using the same tools as Stage 1, all remaining vegetation will be cut down to ground level and the arisings removed from the working area. A suitably experienced ecologist will oversee this process.

Destructive Search

- * This process will be undertaken the following day after the second stage clearance (or where this is not possible the vegetation must be managed at ground level until the destructive search can commence). This will be undertaken using an excavator with toothed bucket under guidance from a suitably experienced ecologist.
- * The working footprint will be subject to a fingertip search prior to works commencing and the machine operator will be given a toolbox talk in relation to reptiles (and other protected species detailed within this document). The destructive search will serve to remove the top soil from east to west through the working area. The ecologist will hand search any areas of wood/stacked arisings prior to removal. Where searching by hand is not possible, the machine will lift the debris for inspection. The debris will be relocated to the wider site. The top soil will be stacked on previously cleared ground to form wind-rows. These will be isolated from adjacent vegetation and left in situ for 24 hours to enable any trapped animals to escape. Specific locations for windrows will be decided by the ecologist at the time of the works.

³ The grassland field is subject to regular management so at the time of habitat manipulation commencing, it may only be possible to carry out the second stage of habitat clearance if the sward is already under 200mm at the time of the works.

- 2.54 If any reptiles are encountered during the habitat manipulation process or destructive search phase, works will temporarily cease and the ecologist will relocate individuals to suitable cover to the north or south of the working area.
- 2.55 Once the destructive search phase is complete the works to create the driveway and can proceed without any further constraints posed by reptiles.

Justification of Approach

- 2.56 These precautionary working measures have been designed in accordance with recommendations provided in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and in accordance with best practice methodologies detailed in current guidelines for the species concerned. The aim of the precautionary approach to site clearance and preparation works is to avoid or reduce to 'very unlikely' the risk of triggering any legal offence.
- 2.57 The proposal to displace a small number of animals potentially present within the works area into the adjacent habitat, is thought appropriate in this case as only small areas of habitat will be cleared.
- 2.58 Habitat manipulation/site clearance works have been timed to take place when it will be least disruptive to the target species. With removal of vegetation above 50cm from ground level undertaken when dormice are in hibernation and not active within the vegetation which is also outside the bird nesting season. Ground level vegetation and associated ground level features will only be cleared outside of the hibernation/dormancy periods for hazel dormouse, great crested newts and reptiles; when any animals potentially present are active and are able to move as into retained habitats as vegetation and features are cleared. In summary, if the precautionary measures are strictly followed, the works will not impair the ability of the targeted species potentially present on the site to survive, breed or reproduce, rear or nurture their young or to hibernate.
- 2.59 It is considered highly unlikely that these works will significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species concerned or result in an adverse effect on the conservation status of European protected species (hazel dormouse and great crested newts).

Personnel

- 2.60 The mitigation solution detailed within this document will be implemented by the on-site contractors and overseen, as required, by the project ecologist who must be suitably licenced. It is the responsibility of the landowner/applicant to ensure that this methodology is adhered to and works are completed accordingly.