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Job Name: **Land south Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood**
Date: **1st December 2025**
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Subject: **Technical Note – Great Crested Newts NatureSpace Response**

The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Virtue Land to produce a Preliminary Ecological Assessment to support the planning application at land south Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood (DM/25/2474), hereafter referred to as the site. The PEA determined that it is considered unlikely that great crested newts are present on or using the site. However, NatureSpace provided a consultee response on 11th November 2024 stating that '*the applicant has not adequately demonstrated that there will be no impact to great crested newts and/or their habitat as a result of the development being approved'*. As such, this technical note has been produced to provide further information regarding the habitat suitability within the site and the likelihood of Great Crested Newts (GCN) within the site.

NatureSpace has provided their Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for GCN, and the site is within the red zone (Figure 1), indicating highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence. However, the IRZs are not determined with surveys undertaken on the ground, and the information that informs the zones is not publicly available. As such, it is difficult to utilise this information to fully determine the presence of GCN.

Figure 1: Impact Risk Zones for GCN

The site comprises a cherry laurel dominated woodland, which prevents the development of ground flora (Figure 2). As a result, the site provides limited terrestrial habitat for GCN, as it does not provide foraging opportunities, and GCN have limited shelter when travelling on this habitat. Given the lack of ground flora, it is unlikely that GCN would utilise the site, as more suitable habitats appear to be present within the core terrestrial range (50m) of the ponds in the local area (located 235m south of the site), based on aerial imagery. Additionally, the presence of multiple deep vehicle tracks further reduces habitat suitability by making the site difficult for GCN to traverse.

Figure 2: Photos of cherry laurel dominated woodland.

NatureSpace has referenced a GCN record within 100m of the site. Records returned from SxBRC included a positive eDNA result located within grid square TQ424367, approximately 100m north of the site, and it is assumed that this is the same record referenced by NatureSpace. Based on OS maps, aerial imagery and the IRZ plan provided by NatureSpace, no pond is located approximately 100m north. In order to verify the location of the pond associated with this record, a review was undertaken of recent planning applications and supporting documentation within the surrounding area, including those situated within grid square TQ424367. Several ecological reports were identified within this grid square; however, none recorded the presence of any ponds. The identified reports referenced an eDNA survey undertaken in 2016 for a pond located approximately 450m to the northeast of the site. Consequently, given the absence of a pond within grid square TQ424367 and the findings of the reviewed ecological reports, it is considered that the eDNA record is likely to be incorrect.

In addition, in the unlikely event that an eDNA record is located 100m north of the site, Hammerwood Road and residential properties are located directly adjacent to the north of the site and would be a dispersal barrier for GCN (Figure 3). In addition, the section of Hammerwood Road adjacent to the site includes a kerb with drainage holes, which will prevent GCN from being able to commute into the site, which is again considered unlikely given the site does not support any aquatic habitat or suitable terrestrial habitat.

Figure 3: Hammerwood Road and residential houses directly adjacent to the north of the site.

As such, given the limited terrestrial habitat within the site, the distance of the closest pond, and the dispersal barrier to the north of the site, it is considered that GCN are unlikely to be present within the site.

As a precaution, the following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) should be employed during habitat clearance to avoid impacting great crested newts. RAMs will minimise the risk of an offence being committed under Regulation 41 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

- Habitat clearance should be overseen by an ecologist. Initially, the ground should be hand-searched by the ecologist for great crested newts. If the vegetation is tall and dense, then sensitive cutting with hand tools should be undertaken and overseen by the ecologist. Reducing the height of the vegetation will allow an additional more thorough hand search to be undertaken for great crested newts.
- If deemed suitable by the ecologist, the ground can be slowly stripped with a toothless bucket on an excavator. The removed sections of vegetation should be gently placed on the ground adjacent and checked by the ecologist before they are removed.
- The removal of rooted vegetation (hedgerows, trees and dense scrub) should not be undertaken during the great crested newt hibernation period (November-March).
- Rooted vegetation should be removed after a thorough hand search by an ecologist. Once checked, the roots should be slowly removed with an excavator overseen by an ecologist. The root balls

should be lifted slowly, intact and placed on the ground for further inspection by the ecologist for great crested newts.

- Prior to the commencement of works on site and after habitat clearance, the location of the proposed development and potential compound should be kept in a state that is unattractive to great crested newts and without potential refuge opportunities.
- Skips and pallets should be stored on hardstanding where possible and should be elevated off the ground. This is to ensure no features are created that great crested newts could potentially use as refugia.
- Where trenches and holes are dug, these should not be left open overnight. GCN other amphibians and small mammals may get trapped in vertical-sided trenches. Therefore, where there is a risk of this occurring, the holes should be refilled or planks of wood should be placed so that any trapped animals may use these to escape. An ecologist should be contacted to remove any wildlife that becomes trapped.

If a great crested newt is identified on site during work, then the following procedure must be followed:

- If a great crested newt is discovered at the site, all works must cease immediately and Natural England and/or a great crested newt licenced ecologist must be contacted immediately to provide further advice.
- A licence might be required before work can recommence. If so, procedures will be followed to obtain a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence or the district-level licence for the works.
- It is considered that if these methods are used on site, then it is considered that no individual great crested newt would be harmed as a result of the proposals.