


Consultee Response

Case Ref: DM/25/2474	Date: 11 November 2025
From: NatureSpace	Response: Further Information Required
<p>This planning application is for: The erection of twelve houses, comprising 4x two bedroom houses, 4x three bedroom houses & 4x four bedroom houses, with associated access (Via Yewhurst Close) and parking</p> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The development falls within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts. 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 highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence.- There are 8 ponds within 500m of the development proposal, the closest of which are approximately located 220m south east and 225m south.- There is a recent great crested newt records within 100m.- There is direct connectivity between the development and surrounding features in the landscape.  <p>Figure above: Outline of the site (red) in the context of the surrounding landscape, including the Impact Risk Zones for GCN. Ponds are shown in light blue, not all ponds shown on map. A 250m buffer is shown around the site in green and a 500m buffer in blue. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.</p> <p>Ecological Information</p> <p>The applicant has provided an ecological report, <i>Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, Land South of Hammerwood Road, Ashurstwood, Ecology Partnership, September 2025</i>. Within this report it states that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- “Other woodland (Mixed) was the sole habitat present on the site...ground flora was limited in the woodland...”	

- *"There are no ponds within the site itself, however, there are two ponds within 250m of the site, P1 is located 235m south of the site and -2 is located 215m southeast of the site"*
- *"The majority of the woodland is not suitable for great crested newts, given the extensive cherry laurel. Whilst woodland could provide limited terrestrial habitat, given the lack of ponds within the site distance of the closest ponds, limited ground flora to provide protection and cover for commuting and foraging great crested newts and availability of suitable habitat within the core terrestrial habitat (50m) around the existing ponds within the local area, it is considered unlikely great crested newts are on present or using the site"*
- *"As such, this species will not be discussed further in this report"*

Conclusion and recommendations

The above report has ruled out any impacts for great crested newts as they have reached the conclusion that the site has a lack of terrestrial and aquatic habitat.

However the woodland which dominates most of the site is able to provide many opportunities for sheltering, foraging and hibernating GCN due to the presence of tree root hollows/cracks and crevices within stems, dead wood, fallen debris and any rotting stumps. Additionally, there are two ponds within 250m and further ponds within commutable distance which have very good connectivity to the site through woodland. Current proposals are suggesting that nearly all of this habitat is removed to facilitate development.

The report has identified a 50m buffer as a "core terrestrial habitat" range surrounding the ponds within the landscape, however great crested newts have been shown to move over considerable distances (up to 1.3km from breeding sites). Additionally, the Natural England Standing Advice guidance for local planning authorities advises that surveys on ponds up to 500m from development sites should be requested. With a more recent positive great crested record located within 100m of the development site, this also suggests that they could be present within the landscape.

Therefore as it currently stands, the applicant has not adequately demonstrated that there will no impact to great crested newts and/or their habitat as a result of the development being approved.

Therefore, in line with the guidance from Natural England ([Great crested newts: District Level Licensing for development projects, Natural England, March 2021](#)), there is a reasonable likelihood that great crested newts will be impacted by the development proposals and therefore, the applicant must either:

- Submit a NatureSpace Report or Certificate to demonstrate that the impacts of the proposed development can be addressed through Mid Sussex District Council's District Licence. This method of licensing often removes the need for survey work and onsite mitigation for great crested newts as it provides compensation habitats off site. This would provide certainty to the applicant, as their licensing route can be determined within 10 working days at any time of the year (more details can be found at www.naturespaceuk.com); or
- Provide further information (information on ponds with ecological connectivity to the site), in line with Natural England's [Standing Advice](#), to rule out impacts to great crested

newts*, or demonstrate how any impacts can be addressed through appropriate mitigation/compensation proposals**; or

- If it is determined that there is no suitable habitat impacted on site and the likelihood of great crested newts is very low (through further survey work), then a precautionary working statement in the form of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs)/Non-Licensed Method Statement (NLMS) strategy documents completed by a suitably qualified ecologist may be acceptable for the development.

*i.e., to show that any ponds within 500m are not suitable for great crested newts and/or show how any potential impacts can be avoided.

*To do so, surveys to determine presence/likely absence and population size class assessments may need to be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist in accordance with Natural England's Standing (Great crested newts: advice for making planning decisions – GOV.UK) (and if using eDNA surveys, the Great Crested Newt Environmental eDNA Technical Advice Note (Natural England 2014)). If GCN are identified, appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures will need to be identified to satisfy planning requirements and a site-based mitigation licence may be required. Surveys are seasonally constrained.

Please note that Naturespace can be contacted at any time for a quote to enter the District Licensing scheme, which does not require further seasonally constrained newt survey work. More details on the District Licensing Scheme operated by the council can be found at www.naturespaceuk.com

Contact details: info@naturespaceuk.com

Relationship between NatureSpace and Mid Sussex District Council

Mid Sussex District Council holds a Great Crested Newt Organisational (or "District") Licence granted by Natural England. This is administered by NatureSpace Partnership through their District Licensing Scheme as the council's delivery partner. A dedicated 'District Licensing Officer' is employed by NatureSpace to provide impartial advice to the council and help guide them and planning applicants through the process. All services and arrangements are facilitated in an unbiased, independent and transparent manner. You can find out more at www.naturespaceuk.com

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Reasonable Likelihood of Protected Species

Permission can be refused if adequate information on protected species is not provided by an applicant, as it will be unable to assess the impacts on the species and thus meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), ODPM Circular 06/2005 or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Council has the power to request information under Article 4 of the Town and Country (Planning Applications) Regulations 1988

(SI1988.1812) (S3) which covers general information for full applications. CLG 2007 'The validation of planning applications' states that applications should not be registered if there is a requirement for an assessment of the impacts of a development on biodiversity interests.

Section 99 of ODPM Circular 06/2005 states:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and / or planning obligations before permission is granted."

Great crested newts

Great crested newts and their habitats are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Therefore, it is illegal to deliberately capture, injure, kill, disturb or take great crested newts or to damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb any great crested newts occupying a place of shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to any place of shelter or protection (see the legislation or seek legal advice for full details). Local planning authorities have a statutory duty in exercising of all their functions to *'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity,'* as stated under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended), as well as a duty under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive. As a result, GCN and their habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys

Validity of ecological reports and surveys can become compromised overtime due to being out-of-date. CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017) states, if the age of data is between 12-18 months, *"the report authors should highlight whether they consider it likely to be necessary to update surveys"*. If the age of the data is between 18 months to 3 years an updated survey and report will be required and anything more than 3 years old *"The report is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated"*.