

**Great Crested Newt Habitat
Suitability Survey
Long Eves Farm**



Document Prepared August 2025

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1.0 Habitat Suitability Assessment: Great Crested Newts: Preface

A Habitat Suitability Assessment using the HSI tool below was used to evaluate a number of water bodies noted in proximity to the proposed development at the site. The potential for great Crested Newt on site was noted in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report, Bodnar, 2025:

Great Crested Newt

The Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is one of the two rarest amphibian species in Britain. It is primarily a terrestrial animal, spending much of its life on land, but returning to the water to breed. Great crested newts (GCNs) will often return to breed in the same waterbody where they were spawned. In addition, they are highly opportunistic and will also colonise suitable new waterbodies rapidly. Great Crested Newt is a '*European protected species*' afforded full protection under both UK and European legislation. This protection extends to the habitats which support it. The habitats within 500m of a breeding pond are generally considered to be protected by the legislation.

A HSI evaluation of ponds within 500m was undertaken as part of the previous application for this site (2024). Note that at the time of survey the pond immediately to the SE (the only pond within 100m) was dry at time of survey, see image below:



It is unlikely that Great Crested Newts are on site, therefore further surveys are not justified, instead a series of precautions, designed to protect all amphibians are recommended. The following non-licensed avoidance measures are recommended to ensure against committing an offence with respect to individual Great Crested Newts. It should be noted that failure to follow these procedures may significantly increase the likelihood of causing an offence. It should also be taken into account that if newts are discovered in the working area at any stage during the works, works may have to be halted and a Natural England mitigation licence obtained. This may incur considerable delays and costs.

1. Ensure all workers whose operations may affect Great Crested Newts are familiar with the legislation as detailed at the start of this section. At site induction talks all workers must agree to work in accordance with and fully follow these Reasonable Avoidance Measures. It is recommended that the owner / developer or their agent keep a record of the details of workers who have been inducted onto the site.
2. All workers should be informed that newts spend much of the year out of ponds in areas that provide shelter such as tall vegetation, piles of rubble and wood etc., cracks and cavities in the ground and under paving slabs. Newts may also bury into soft earth. Not only are the newts themselves protected by legislation, but their terrestrial resting places and aquatic breeding habitats are protected as well.
3. Information on what to look for and identifying newts should be made available to all site staff.
4. All workers must be made aware that if GCN are found, works should be halted and there is a correct procedure in place to follow, and failure to halt works may result in committing an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2010, revised 2017.
5. At no point should any worker handle a Great Crested Newt or suspected Great Crested Newt. Unlicensed handling is illegal and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.
6. In the unlikely event that newts are found at any time during works at the site, if possible replace the covering without damaging the newt and halt ground-level works immediately. A suitably experienced ecologist should then be contacted for advice. A Natural England development license may be required before works can continue. This may entail considerable delays and costs.

7. If site operatives can confidently identify that the newt found is not a Great Crested Newt, the newt can be carefully moved out of the area of works and placed in nearby habitat similar to that in which it was found. A newt found on land should not be placed into a pond or other water body.
8. Ideally, the remainder of the site clearance and ground works which include (but are not limited to), digging and constructing footings, excavation of service conduits, drainage works etc. should be restricted to the winter period (October – through January) to avoid impact on terrestrial newts. Ideally, keep the period of groundworks as short as possible.
9. Backfill any trenches or other excavations the same day before nightfall and only carry out ground works during daylight hours.
10. Keep all new construction materials raised off the floor on pallets etc. to prevent their use as a refuge.

General Advice Regarding Amphibians and reptiles

- ☐ Site staff should be made aware that all snakes, slow worms and other common reptiles species are protected from deliberate killing under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- ☐ If any amphibians (other than Great Crested Newt) or reptiles are found within the working area they should be removed to an area outside of the working zone (preferably in dense vegetation, a rubble pile, or under lying wood).
- ☐ Amphibians should be picked up by placing the fingers under the body and lifting, not by grasping any part of them. They can be held still by placing a thumb gently on top of them, if necessary.
- ☐ Handling should be kept to a minimum and latex gloves should be avoided. Vinyl, Nitrile and other non-latex gloves are ok and should be used where possible.
- ☐ If the amphibians/reptiles found are hibernating then they should be collected up and placed in a covered box or bucket while a suitable shelter / hibernaculum is prepared for them. Advice on which should be sought from an ecologist.
- ☐ Avoid burning or machine removal of any potential hibernacula (wood piles, debris etc.) without a thorough hand search for amphibians, reptiles and hedgehogs.

The Local Planning Authority have also noted the following:

“If LCC Ecology can’t review the HSI scores carried out on the ponds within 500m of this application as stated in the ecology report (May 2025) then there will be a holding objection. The current works will include demolition and rebuilding, ground works, hedge and tree removal which will destroy GCN terrestrial habitat.

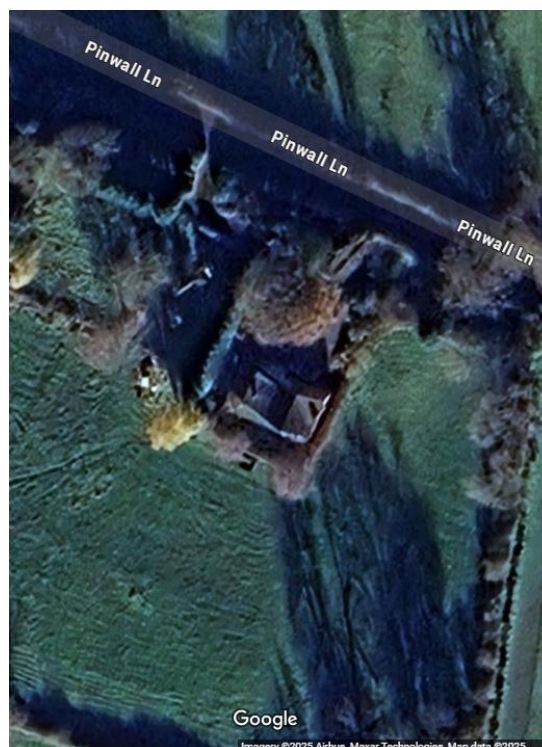
There is terrestrial habitat on site (supplied photographs) and direct connectivity between ponds within 250m of the application (rough grassland, hedgerow bases, gaps within roots, leaf litter, piles of logs and rubble). Following government guidance on when to ask for a GCN survey, a survey of all ponds within 250m will be required which will include a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This will inform on any further survey work, mitigation or licencing requirements for the development to proceed.

At the moment, we can’t demonstrate that GCN are not present as the presence of protected species will not have been established before the determination of the planning application.”

1.2. Site Location

The site is located at Long Eaves farm, Pinwall Lane, Pinwall, CV9 3ND. A satellite image and Phase One diagram (see Appendices) also show the areas concerned.

Figure 1. Satellite image showing site location



Map data 2025© Google.



Map data 2025© Google.

Figure 2. Satellite image of local area around the site.

1.3. Site Description

The development comprises a 1970s two storey detached house, with landscape trees around. The building has a linked clay tile pitched roof and replaced UPVC windows and doors. Small retained roofspace. To the rear is an improved grass agricultural field. The site is located in Pinwall, near Atherstone. It is surrounded in all directions by arable land. (See Appendix 1b).

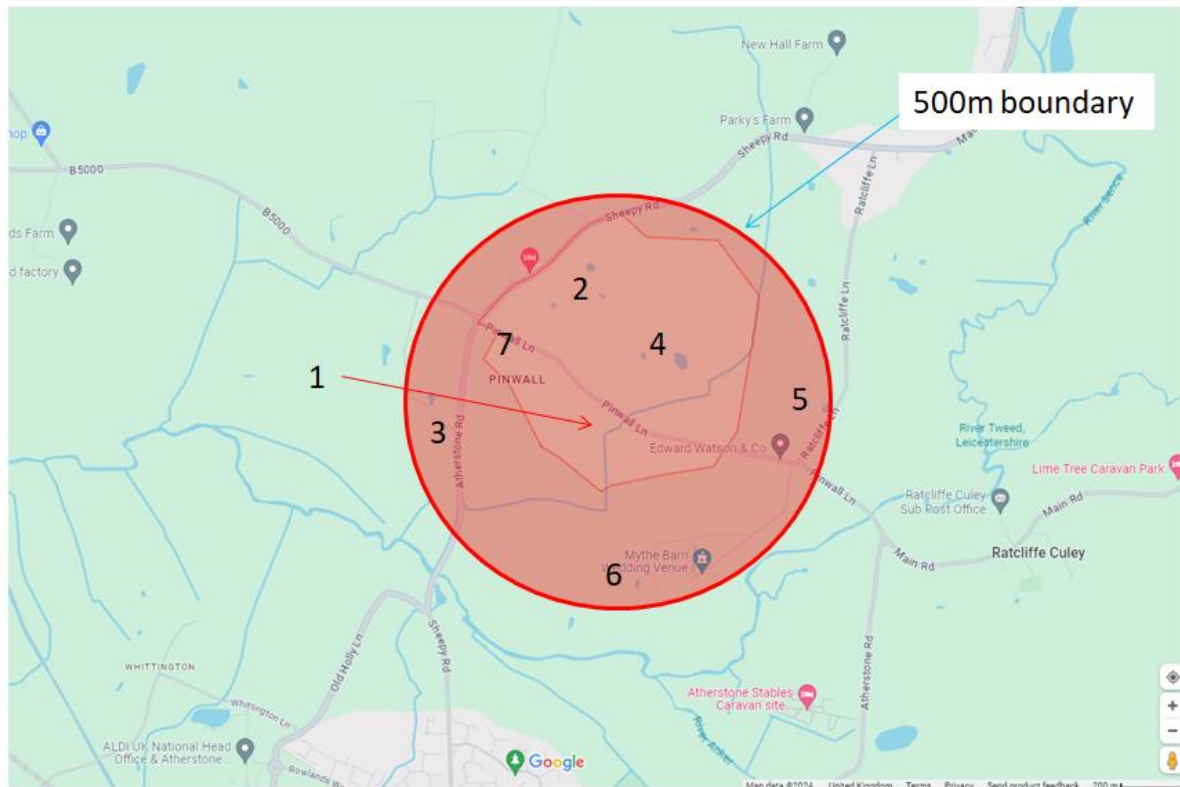
1.4. Brief Description of Project

The area is subject to a planning application for the demolition of the existing residential building and a new build. See plans below and refer to planning application for detailed plans.



1.5 Ponds in the area

There are a number of water bodies (some close ones grouped) within 500m, I have re-assessed this using the actual development area as a criteria. See below:



Pond 1: dry at time of survey: 50m South



Pond group 2: 325-375m NW



No access granted, however it can be seen that 2 of the ponds are for cattle drinking and the third to the south is terrestrialised with full canopy cover. Private land and no access permitted.

Pond 3: 425m W



No access permitted. Small pond adjacent to farm buildings

Pond 4 (2 ponds North of site at 250m) No access granted



Pond 5 Roadside:



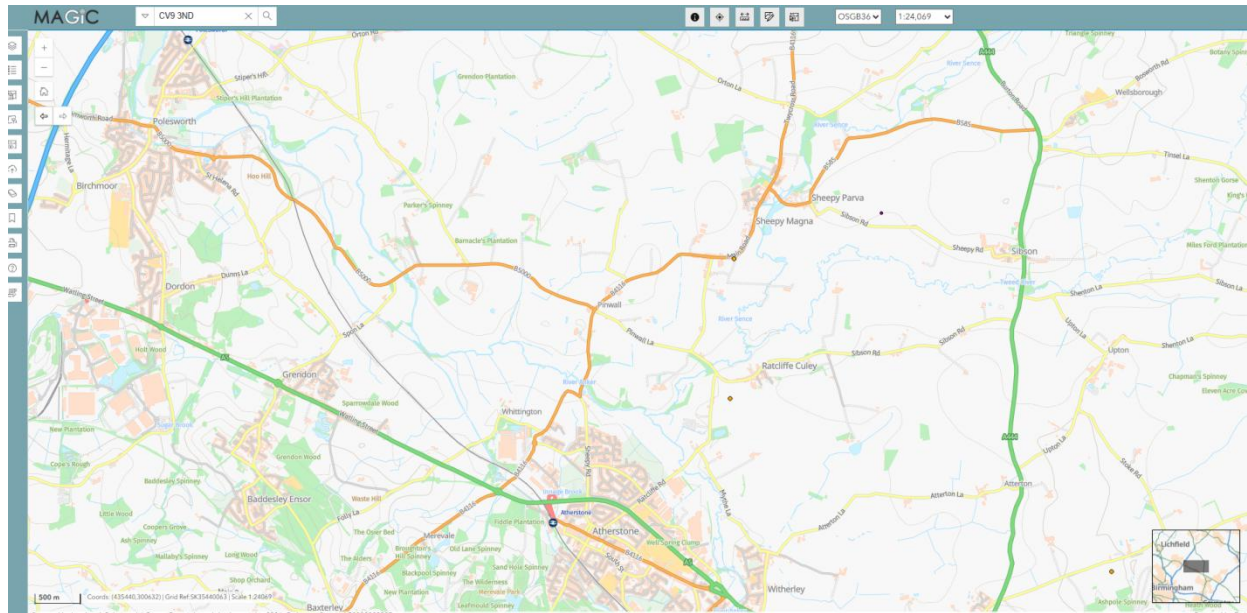


Pond 6: No access permitted: (450mS)



Known records: The Natural England 'MAGIC' site was investigated for nearby records:

A Natural England 'Magic' data search (shown below) illustrates the locations of all European Protected Species license applications in the locality relating to bat roosts and herpetiles.



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Great Crested Newt present at a pond 2.5km NE of the site. (2017 record). The Local Planning Authority Ecologist also notes a record at 750m from the proposed development (2024 email).

2.0 Method: Habitat Suitability Index (Assessment)

The survey method employed is determined by Natural England's Standing Advice for Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* (refer to Natural England web-site), recommends the following generic advice:

Field survey

An initial survey of the terrestrial habitats and quality of the ponds within, and adjacent to, the development footprint is a useful starting point. This should ideally follow the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) methodology developed by Oldham *et al.* 2000 which looks at a number of variables including pond size, terrestrial habitat, pond shading and water quality to derive a probability of newts being present within a pond. This is a helpful tool for large schemes as it may help to „scope out“ some ponds for more detailed surveys. Please note that HSI assessments are not an alternative to carrying out a more detailed survey should one be required

2.1 Habitat Suitability Assessment

Any ponds were then assessed for habitat suitability for great crested newts, utilising the modified Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (Oldham *et al.*, 2000). The habitat suitability index provides a means of evaluating habitat quality. The Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) is a numerical index between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates suitable habitat and 1 represents optimal habitat. The HSI score is then utilised to define the suitability of the pond on a categorical scale (Table below). The system is not precise enough to allow the conclusion that a pond with a high score will support great crested newts whilst those with a low score will not. See Appendix 7 for reference document of the Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index.

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
< 0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
> 0.8	Excellent

Table 2.1: HSI scoring for pond suitability

3.0 results: Great Crested Newts

The survey was undertaken on 14th August 2025 by Dr. Stefan Bodnar MCIEEM, who holds a Natural England Class License CL08 1159, level 2 survey. **The survey was limited as so few ponds were accessible.**

Great crested newts are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38). Because of their rarity they are also protected under Annexes IIa and IVa of the Habitats and Species Directive and under the Berne Convention. In 2007, the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 was amended particularly in relation to designated European Protected Species (EPS) which includes great crested newt. In particular, the amendment removes the requirement for actions to be intentional or reckless in order for an offence to be committed.

Langton *et alia* (2001) make the point that:

“The wording in the 1981 Act and 1994 Regulations is slightly different.” “Taken together, the Act and the Regulations (following the CROW Act 2000) make it illegal to:

Intentionally or deliberately capture or kill, or intentionally injure great crested newts.

- *Deliberately disturb great crested newts or intentionally or recklessly * disturb them in a place used for shelter or protection.*
- *Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.*
- *Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.*
- *Possess a great crested newt, or any part of it, unless acquired lawfully.*
- *Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale great crested newts or parts of them.*

**Reckless offences were added by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which applies only to England and Wales”.*

Habitat Suitability Assessment

All pools that could be accessed though in this case only 2 (1 and 5) were accessible. Images below:

HSI Indices	Pond 2c		Pond 2a		Pond 2b		Pond 3	
	Attribute	Score	Attribute	Score	Attribute	Score	Attribute	Score
Name								
SI1 - Geographic location	A	1	A	1	A	1	A	1
SI2 – Pond area to nearest 50m ² (m ²)	100	0.2	150	0.3	250	0.5	100	0.2
SI3 – Pond drying (frequency)	Never	0.9	Never	0.9	Never	0.9	Never	0.9
SI4 – Water quality	Moderate	0.67	Poor	0.33	Poor	0.33	Poor	0.33
SI5 – Pond shading (%)	100%	0.2	0%	1	0%	1	50%	1
SI6 – Water Fowl	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1
SI7 - Fish	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1
SI8 – Pond density	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1
SI9 – Surrounding terrestrial habitat	Poor	0.33	None	0.01	None	0.01	Poor	0.33
SI10 – Macrophyte (aquatic plant) density(%)	0%	0.3	0%	0.3	0%	0.3	20%	0.5
HSI SCORE		0.547		0.4392		0.4623		0.63
CATEGORY	Below Average		Poor		Poor		Average	

Pond 4a		Pond 4b		Pond 5		Pond 6	
Attribute	Score	Attribute	Score	Attribute	Score	Attribute	Score
A	1	A	1	A	1	A	1
500	1	300	0.8	175	0.4	100	0.2
Never	0.9	Never	0.9	Never	0.9	Never	0.9

Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67	Poor	0.33
80%	0.6	90%	0.4	100%	0.2	100%	0.2
Minor	0.67	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1
Major	0.01	Possible	0.67	Possible	0.67	Absent	1
5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1
Poor	0.33	Poor	0.33	Poor	0.33	Poor	0.33
0%	0.3	0%	0.3	0%	0.3	0%	0.3
	0.4345		0.6467221		0.5630043		0.5093838
Poor		Average		Below Average		Below Average	

The survey concluded that for the nearby waterbodies that could be surveyed all other than ponds 3 and 4a were at poor or below average for great crested newt potential, ponds 3 and 4b (425m and 250m respectively) were of average quality category for great crested newts. The nearby pond, that is to be restored and expanded, was dry at time of survey and images suggest that this may be terrestrialised for most, if not all of the year. There are road barriers and very poor close cropped grassland and arable creating barriers to the site.

Using the available guidance in respect of survey effort, the classification reached using the HSI tool indicates that there is no need for further surveys in regard to great crested newts, though reasonable avoidance measures during construction operations should be adopted.

Using the HSI in conjunction with Natural England's Rapid Assessment Tool in relation to great crested newts, it is determined that there is a very low possibility of great crested newts being damaged by this proposed development. See exert below from guidance:

Guidance on risk assessment result categories

"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 license 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. Particular note should be made of the development site, comprising an existing house, hardstanding and domestic garden provides poor opportunities, for great crested newts to live in and no features to breed within.

3. Licensing and Mitigation

There are populations of great crested newt recorded within 750m, of the site. Although 2 ponds are of average potential for great crested newt, neither of these are impacted by the development and both are at considerable distance (250m and 425m), see plan of proposed below:



On that basis and the HSI, the following determination was made:

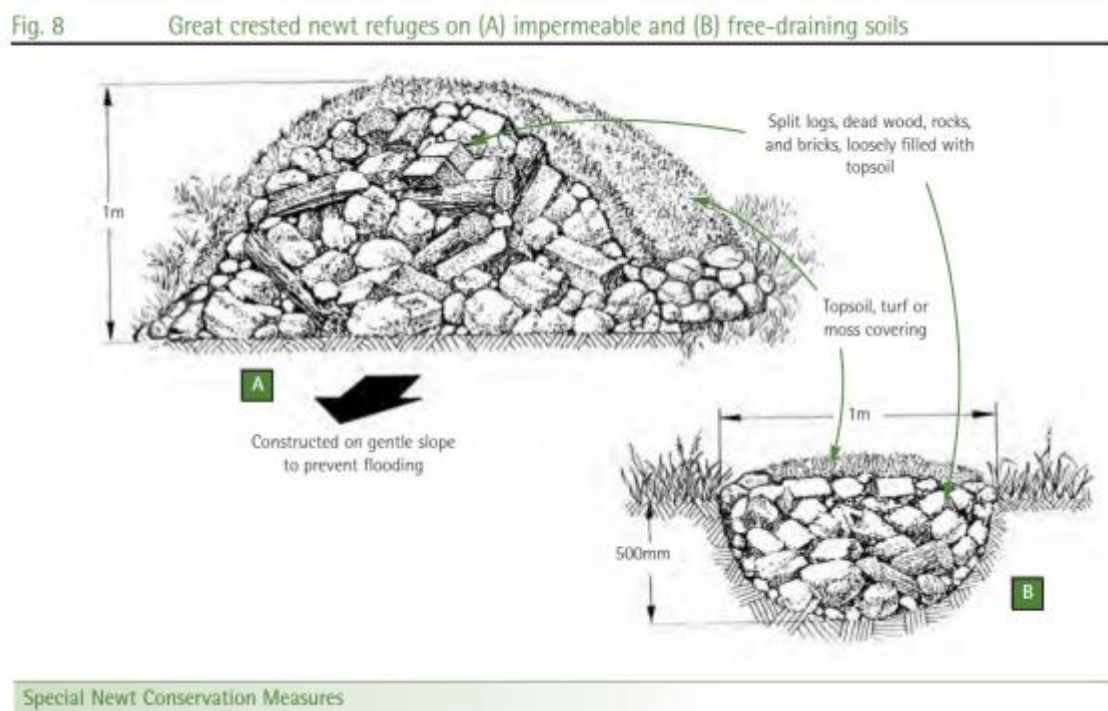
Licensing and mitigation

Great Crested Newts are unlikely to be present on the site. The work involved will not impact on any known breeding pools, or have significant loss or impact on land that is suitable for great crested newt. There are no on-site pools. The landscape strategy should provide a range of enhancements to the habitats on site. It is considered that the temporary disturbance of this very restricted and poor quality area of land can be adequately addressed by reasonable avoidance measures in respect of great crested newt.

Licensing in respect of development will not be required in this instance. Improving the site and its

surrounds for amphibians in recommended within the site development.

Creation of 2 x refugia on site edges, design below



Recommendations for safeguarding newts

Although the risk to great crested newts is minimal, there will be a need for appropriate safeguards and reasonable avoidance through appropriate working methods to be employed during the development works. These are summarized below:

1. Carefully strip of any paved area, long grass or gravel on which the development is to take place. There is a very low chance that newts (including common species) could use these structures as refugia. It is recommended that this is undertaken under direct ecological supervision
2. If great crested newts are discovered at any time during processes involved with the development, work should cease immediately and the advice of a licensed ecologist sought.
3. All site staff involved with site clearance and construction works are to be made aware of the potential (although extremely low) for encountering great crested newts through a tool kit talk and the appropriate measures to be taken if great crested newts are encountered.
4. Keep duration of ground-works as short as possible.
5. Undertake during the day works that might only affect newts above ground.

6. Backfill trenches and other excavations before nightfall, or leave a ramp to allow newts to easily exit. Raise stored materials (that might act as temporary resting places) off the ground, e.g. on pallets

7. The trees and hedgerows on and near to the site will be largely retained during the development.

8. Working areas and storage: all storage of materials to take place on pallets, keep working area and disturbance within red boundary area, without tracking or construction vehicles entering other areas of the site.

Toolbox talks:

These are directly from the CIRIA web-site, and are as follows. It is recommended that each site worker is provided with a copy of these sheets, and signs to that effect. a copy should be left at all times in the site office along with the emergency contact name and number (Dr. Stefan Bodnar 07429 209549).

- **Precautions during works, including toolkit talks and site actions during/prior to site strip**
- **Pond planting, management and terrestrial habitat management to benefit great crested newts. Location and specification shown on landscaping scheme.**

Pre-construction phase

The grassland within the site is to be kept short (under 10cm) to ensure there is no shelter available for great Crested newts on site.

Construction Phase actions

The principle threat to existing Great Crested Newt habitat will arise from the clearance of vegetation.

As these are operations consistent with normal garden maintenance it is felt that this does not represent an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside act (1981) in regard to the destruction of European Protected Species habitat and, therefore, it would not be necessary to apply for Natural England licencing.

The Wildlife and Countryside act (1981) also proscribes recklessly or intentionally killing or injuring Great Crested Newts and mitigation measures need to be taken to prevent this, both during the clearance of the site and throughout the processes of construction (which will potentially create

temporary favorable habitats, attracting newts onto the site and into hazardous situations).

Before any work commences the site (including sufficient area for the storage and handling of plant and materials and other operations such as the mixing of cement) should be checked for presence of great crested newt, including by direct supervision of site strip.

Once it is considered that all potential newt refugia on the site have been checked and the site working areas de-risked, the following proposed works may be carried out by normal methods. However, should any Great Crested Newts be discovered during subsequent works, a licensed newt worker must be consulted and work in that area must cease until any newts have been removed to a place of safety. To this end, any workers on site should be advised on the recognition of Great Crested Newts before carrying out any works.

Any operations involving the potential disturbance of newts must be carried out outside the hibernating season (usually November to February) and only when the ambient temperature is above 5°C (Gent and Gibson, 2003).

It is considered important not to deliberately attract newts to more well-used areas of the garden.

Site working: Recommendations for safeguarding newts

Although the risk to great crested newts is minimal, there will be a need for appropriate safeguards and reasonable avoidance through appropriate working methods to be employed during the development works. These are summarized below:

1. Carefully strip of any paved area or gravel on which the development is to take place. There is a very low chance that newts (including common species) could use these structures as refugia
2. If great crested newts are discovered at any time during processes involved with the development, work should cease immediately and the advice of a licensed ecologist sought.
3. All site staff involved with site clearance and construction works are to be made aware of the potential (although extremely low) for encountering great crested newts through a tool kit talk and the appropriate measures to be taken if great crested newts are encountered.
4. Keep duration of ground-works as short as possible.
5. Undertake during the day works that might only affect newts above ground.
6. Backfill trenches and other excavations before nightfall, or leave a ramp to allow newts to easily exit. Raise stored materials (that might act as temporary resting places) off the ground, e.g. on

pallets

7. The trees and hedgerows on and near to the site will be largely retained during the development.

8. Working areas and storage: all storage of materials to take place on pallets, keep working area and disturbance within red boundary area, without tracking or construction vehicles entering other areas of the site.

9. If great crested newts are discovered at any time during processes involved with the development, work should cease immediately and the advice of a licensed bat ecologist sought.

10. All site staff involved with the site clearance and construction works are to be made aware of the potential for encountering great crested newts through a tool kit talk and the appropriate measures to be taken if great crested newts are encountered.

11. Initiate appropriate safeguarding during any pre-development site investigation works, as detailed below:

Project element	Suggestions for avoidance measures
Design and location Timing & duration	Design layout so that any hard landscaping is as far as possible from ponds, with retained habitat and soft landscaping toward ponds. (a) Keep duration of groundworks as short as possible. (b) Undertake during the day works that might only affect newts above ground.
Construction methods and special precautions	(a) Backfill trenches and other excavations before nightfall, or leave a ramp to allow newts to easily exit. (b) Raise stored materials (that might act as temporary resting places) off the ground, e.g. on pallets. (c) For pipelines, use directional drilling

	to cross areas of core habitat and dispersal routes. (d) Avoid installing structures that act as barriers close to ponds, or include gaps at ground level where walls or fences are unavoidable.
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Contents of toolkit talk: (below):

Toolbox talk 1: protected species

Amphibians (common)

What are they and how are they recognised?

There are seven native amphibian species in the UK:

- 1 Common toad.
- 2 Common frog.
- 3 Common newt.
- 4 Palmate newt.
- 5 Great crested newt (GNC).
- 6 Natterjack toad.
- 7 Pool frog.

In England, Wales and Scotland the first four species are fairly widespread. In Northern Ireland only the common frog and common newt are found. These widespread species may be found living side-by-side with the fully-protected GNC or (less commonly) the natterjack toad. The pool frog, which was recently re-introduced to a single site in East Anglia, is strictly protected.

Where are they found?

The four widespread amphibian species are frequently encountered on construction sites, both in or around water (including temporary pools) and on land among grass, scrub, woodland and under logs and rocks.

When are they found?

Ponds have the highest numbers of amphibians in the spring, when they are used for breeding, but are still likely to contain lower numbers throughout the year.

Young amphibians remain in the water as tadpoles or larvae until they change into tiny, miniature adults and then move on to land. They can be found on land from April onwards.

Adults and juveniles can also be found on land at any time. Most amphibians hibernate on land during the winter months, though the common frog can also hibernate in mud at the bottom of ponds.



What should be done if one is found?

In England, Wales and Scotland, disturbance of the common frog, common toad, common or palmate newt does not require a licence, but all four species are of conservation concern and they are all protected against cruelty and against sale or trade.

In Northern Ireland the common frog receives protection only against sale etc but the common newt is fully protected.

When conducting works the following should be adhered to where possible:

- protect and remove individuals from danger. Captured animals are legally protected against cruelty
- amphibians, particularly when very young or hibernating, are likely to be injured during vegetation clearance using strimmers etc. Where possible this should be undertaken in autumn when animals are active, but not breeding. Leave grass height at 10 cm where possible.

When clearing sites dismantle all sheltering places, such as rock piles and logs etc, by hand and place any animals in a cool, damp, sheltered place away from danger.

Take particular care in winter – animals may be hibernating within rock-piles and vegetation and are highly vulnerable to killing and injury.

In Northern Ireland, where the common newt is fully protected against killing, capture, injury and disturbance, and the places they use for shelter or protection are protected against damage or destruction, it will be necessary to show that all reasonable effort was made to avoid breaking the law and that adequate surveys have been carried out.

Where common newts are present, mitigation measures should be agreed with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). If a common newt is found (or suspected) on a site in Northern Ireland after works have started, all works must stop immediately and expert advice sought.

If in any doubt about the identity of a species that has been found, do not disturb it as doing so may be illegal. Consult an expert.

What else may be seen?

In England, Wales and Scotland, any of these species can be found in ponds with the GNC or, occasionally, the natterjack toad. Both these species are fully protected. It is illegal to capture, injure, kill or disturb GNC or natterjack toads, or damage or obstruct their habitat.

GNCs are almost twice the size of the smaller species, reaching up to 19 cm.

Natterjack toads have a distinctive yellow stripe running along the length of their back.

"Alien" species

Many non-native amphibians have been introduced into the UK, sometimes as unwanted pets. In some cases, such as the bull frog, introduced species cause great damage to British wildlife and are considered pests.

If a species is found that is not recognised, put them in a cool damp container with some shelter. Seek expert advice from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), an ecologist, a wildlife crime officer, the local reptile and amphibian group or a local zoo. Alien species are not native to the UK and should not be released once captured. All animals are protected against cruelty.

Toolbox talk 7: protected species

Great crested newt

Toolbox talk 7: Great crested newt

What are they and how are they recognised?

Newts are amphibians – they can live both in water and on land. Adult great crested newts (GCN) are 110-170 mm long (about twice as big as other newts) and are black or dark brown. During spring and summer, males have a jagged crest along the back and the tail has a silver stripe along it. The females do not have the crest or silver tail stripe, but have a bright orange stripe along the bottom of their tail. Both males and females have bright orange bellies with black spots.

Where are they found?

GCN occur in rural, urban and suburban sites. GCN usually prefer medium to large ponds in which to, but can be found in any body of water on site including temporary pools. GCN spend most of their time on land – they can be found in grass, scrub and woodland and under logs and stones within 250 m to 500 m of the breeding pond.

When are they found?

GCN are nocturnal and are seen mostly at night. They are found in ponds between March and June, but can be seen on land at any time of year.

What should be done if a GCN is found?

GCN are fully protected against killing, capture, injury and disturbance, and the places they use for shelter or protection are protected against damage, destruction or obstruction. If a GCN (adult, juvenile or tadpole) is found (or suspected) on site after works have started, all works in the area must stop immediately and expert advice must be sought.

If there is any doubt of the newt species that has been found, stop work and consult an expert.



What else may be seen?

If GCN are found in a pond, common and/or palmate newts may also be found. Common and palmate newts do not receive the same protection as GCN except in Northern Ireland where the common newt is fully protected. Adults of these species are about the same size as young GCN but are a lighter colour.

Penalties

Breaking the law can lead to fines of up to £5000 per offence and, potentially, prison sentences of up to six months. Any vehicle used to commit the offence may be held liable.

Toolbox talk 14: protected species

Reptiles

What are they and how are they recognised?

There are six native species of land-dwelling reptile in the UK:

- 1 Common lizards grow up to 135 mm long and are various shades of brown with small bars or spots. Young lizards are black or dark copper. The common lizard is the only native reptile found in Northern Ireland.
- 2 Sand lizards have a stockier build than common lizards and typically grow up to 165 mm long. They are brown, grey or sandy coloured with two light stripes and spots that are black with white centres. Males have bright green sides.
- 3 Slow worms can grow up to 400 mm long. They are legless lizards but look like snakes. Males are various shades of grey or brown, females are brown or copper in colour with dark brown sides. Young slow worms are light silver or gold in colour with darker stripes on the sides and back.
- 4 Adders grow up to 550 mm long. These snakes have a dark-coloured zigzag stripe all the way along their body. The background colour may be grey, rust or sandy coloured.
- 5 Grass snakes can grow up to a length of 750 mm. They are olive-green or grey with small black lines and spots and a yellow or orange collar at the neck. Young snakes look similar to adults.
- 6 Smooth snakes typically grow up to 600 mm long. They are grey or brown with two rows of dark coloured spots or bars down the back. There is a black heart-shape marking on the head.

Where are they found?

Reptiles can be found throughout the UK, including in urban areas, in vegetation on railway embankments, churchyards and in hedgerows, sheltering under logs, rocks and compost heaps, or basking in open sunlight. Typical habitats are dense grassland or scrub with open areas where they can get sunlight. Grass snakes are often seen in or near water but are also found in drier



habitats as are adders. Sand lizards and smooth snakes are very rare and restricted to a few counties in England (sand lizards are also found in north Wales). Those species most likely to be seen are the common lizard and the slow worm.

When are they found?

Reptiles are active during the day in spring, summer and autumn and hibernate in winter. Activity is influenced by weather conditions and temperature. Mating takes place between April and June and young hatch between July and October.

What should be done if a reptile is found on site?

All native reptiles are protected by law throughout the UK. In England, Wales and Scotland, it is illegal to kill or injure common lizards, slow worms, grass snakes and adders. All works that may affect sand lizards and smooth snakes are illegal without a development licence. Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage should be consulted regarding mitigation measures.

In Northern Ireland, to avoid prosecution when undertaking development works that will affect common lizards or their habitat, evidence is required that all reasonable effort was made to avoid breaking the law – proof of adequate surveys and mitigation will be needed. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) should be consulted regarding mitigation measures.

What else may be seen?

Several non-native reptiles have been introduced into the UK, sometimes released as unwanted pets. These include the common wall lizard and red-eared terrapin. In some cases, such as the red-eared terrapin, introduced species cause damage to UK wildlife and are considered pests. If these species are found do not let them go again. Release of certain species is illegal. Breaking the law could lead to similar penalties as for protected species. Put the animals in a cool container with some shelter and consult an expert (ie RSPCA, police wildlife liaison officer, local reptile or amphibian group or a local zoo).

If any species of reptile is found on site after development has started, all works in the area should stop immediately to avoid breaking the law. Consult an expert.

If there is any doubt as to which species has been found, stop work and consult an expert.

Penalties

Breaking the law can lead to fines of up to £5000 per offence and, potentially, prison sentences of up to six months. Any vehicle used to commit the offence may be forfeited. Both the company and/or individuals can be held liable.

When might I expect to find them?

- Reptiles are active during the day in spring, summer and autumn and hibernate in winter. Generally, activity is very much influenced by weather conditions and temperature.
- Mating takes place between April and June and young are born between July and October.

What do I do if I find a reptile on site?

All British reptiles are protected by law throughout the UK.

In England, Wales and Scotland, it is illegal to kill or injure common lizards, slow worms, grass snakes and adders. All works that may affect sand lizards and smooth snakes are illegal without a development licence.

In Northern Ireland, all works that may affect common lizards are illegal.

Consult an expert.

PENALTIES

Breaking the law can lead to fines of up to £5000 *per offence* and, potentially, prison sentences of up to six months. For example, damaging a patch of scrub that contains common lizards can lead to prosecution. Any vehicle used to commit the offence may be forfeited. Both the company and/or individuals can be held liable.

IF ANY SPECIES OF REPTILE IS FOUND ON SITE AFTER DEVELOPMENT HAS STARTED, ALL WORKS MUST STOP IMMEDIATELY TO AVOID BREAKING THE LAW.

What else might I see?

- A number of non-native reptiles have been introduced into the UK, sometimes as unwanted pets. These include the common wall lizard and red-eared terrapin.
- In some cases, such as the red-eared terrapin, introduced species cause damage to British wildlife and are considered pests.
- If you find these species do not let them go again, release of certain species is illegal. Breaking the law could lead to similar penalties as for protected species! Put the animals in a cool container with some shelter and consult an expert (RSPCA, police wildlife liaison officer, local reptile or amphibian group or a local zoo).

IF IN ANY DOUBT AS TO WHICH SPECIES YOU HAVE FOUND, STOP WORK AND CONSULT AN EXPERT!



