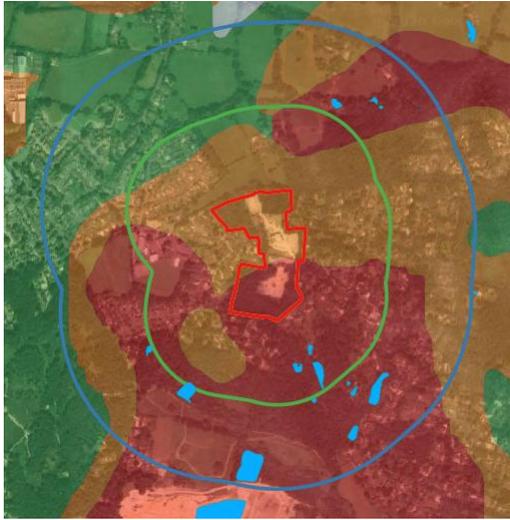


## Consultee Response

Case Ref: DC/25/2087	Date: 03 February 2026
From: NatureSpace	Response: Further Information Required
<p>This planning application is for: <b>Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings, and the re-development of the site for up to 108no. dwellings (including a mix of private and affordable housing units), with associated infrastructure including vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access, parking, landscaping, open space and play provision, and sustainable drainage with all matters reserved except access</b></p> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 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.</li><li>- There are 16 ponds within 500m of the development proposal, the closest of which are located onsite and 120m south.</li><li>- There is direct connectivity between the development and surrounding features in the landscape.</li><li>- Natural England Standing Advice guidance for local planning authorities advises that surveys on ponds up to 500m from development sites should be requested.</li></ul>  <p><i>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. 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.</i></p> <p><b>Ecological Information</b></p> <p>The applicant has provided an ecological report, Ecological Impact Assessment, Thakeham Tiles, Rock Road, Storrington, The Ecology Co-op, November 2025. Within this report it states that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>“The Thakeham Tiles site contains one pond within its boundaries, located in the north-eastern woodland parcel on-site. The PEA from Phlorum1 had also identified a drainage</i></li></ul>	

*channel and area of standing water in the north western woodland parcel, but upon repeat inspection these were discovered to have dried up. The desk study revealed a further 14 waterbodies within 500m of the site boundary”*

- *“The owners of the majority of these ponds did not grant permission to undertake further surveys, with only one pond on site and two other ponds carried forward for eDNA testing.”*
- *“eDNA surveys were conducted in April and May 2024, and all three ponds tested negative for the presence of great crested newts.”*
- *“...the site is therefore considered unlikely to support this species. However given that there are still ponds within 250m of the site that could not be accessed, the presence of great crested newts on site cannot be ruled out”*
- *“Based on the above analysis, the proposed development does not require mitigation under an EPS licence. However, the presence of the occasional individual great crested newt cannot be completely discounted and therefore it is recommended that the scheme proceeds under ‘reasonable avoidance measures’”*

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The above report has identified habitat types on site which provide optimal foraging, hibernating and sheltering habitat for GCN such as woodland and dense scrub. Current proposals would require the removal of some of these habitats, and due to good connectivity between the nearby ponds and the development site, removal would therefore have a likely impact on GCN during their terrestrial phases should they be present within ponds surrounding the site. Due to access issues, eDNA surveys were undertaken on only three out of 16 ponds within 500m of the site (including the onsite pond) which returned negative results. However there are several other ponds within dispersal distance whose status remain unknown, including a cluster of ponds located only 117m, 140m and 170m away with good connectivity to the site through woodland. Should nearby ponds be positive for GCN presence, it is considered likely that they will utilise the onsite habitats which are proposed to be removed, meaning an offence is deemed likely here in the absence of further information.

And so we are not satisfied that the applicant has 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 Horsham 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](http://www.naturespaceuk.com)); or
- Provide further information (information on all 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 through further survey work that there is no suitable habitat impacted on site and the likelihood of great crested newts is very low, 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.

More details on the District Licensing Scheme operated by the council can be found at [www.naturespaceuk.com](http://www.naturespaceuk.com)

Contact details: [info@naturespaceuk.com](mailto:info@naturespaceuk.com)

### **Relationship between NatureSpace and Horsham District Council**

*Horsham 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](http://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, December 2024, section 15, 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:

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*"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 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"*.