

Mowbray

Employment Land ~

GCN Report

January 2026



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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1	Background.....	3
2	METHODOLOGY.....	4
2.1	Desk Study.....	4
2.2	Great crested newts	4
2.3	Survey Constraints	4
3	SITE DESCRIPTION	5
3.1	Desk Study.....	5
3.2	Great crested newts	5
4	SUMMARY	6
	REFERENCES.....	7

FIGURES

Figure 1.	Pond Locations	8
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	eDNA Lab Results	9
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by Legal & General (Strategic Land North Horsham) Limited (L&G) to undertake an ecological assessment in relation to an area of land within their wider Mowbray Development, known as the Employment Land, Horsham, herein referred to as the 'Site' (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The Site previously had planning permission for the construction of a business park, which implies the principle of any impact on ecology has been deemed acceptable. The previous permission, however, has subsequently expired and L&G are now seeking outline planning permission (all matters reserved) to provide an Employment Park comprising flexible commercial, industrial and logistics uses (Use Classes E(g), B2, B8), healthcare (Class E(e)) and commercial leisure.
- 1.1.3 To inform the application, a series of ecological surveys were undertaken to ensure that the findings and conclusions of the previous Environmental Statement, in as far as they relate to ecology, are still true and valid. The following report, therefore, presents the methodology and results of a series of great crested newt eDNA survey undertaken in 2025.
- 1.1.4 To avoid confusion, the pond numbering system used throughout the original surveys has been retained within the current assessment.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 The Site sits within L&G's wider landholdings at their North Horsham (Mowbray) site, which has been subject to numerous ecological surveys since 2010; all of which have been considered in the context of the current assessment.

2.2 Great crested newts

- 2.2.1 Three waterbodies lie within 250m of the Site's boundary (P1, P25 & P29; Figure 1), hence it was deemed appropriate to undertake further investigation into the potential presence, or absence, of great crested newts within these features. To this end, an environmental DNA analysis of the water within each waterbody was undertaken in June 2025 following DEFRA survey protocol (Biggs *et al* 2014).
- 2.2.2 Two further waterbodies lie to the north west of the Site at a distance of 210m (P2) and 190 (P30). Both these ponds are known to contain great crested newts and will be the subject of a licenced mitigation strategy, with the ponds being infilled in early 2026. The newt population associated with these ponds will be translocated to the Hillside. Hence, these ponds are not considered further in this report.

2.3 Survey Constraints

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken in line with the latest sectoral guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and BS 42020: 2013 *Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development*.
- 2.3.2 All survey work was undertaken by Derek Finnie MSc DipCons CEnv MEnvSc MCIEEM, Director of Derek Finnie Associates who has over 30 years as a practicing ecologist.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 Great crested newts are known to be present within the wider site (see Figure 1 for more details).

3.2 Great crested newts

- 3.2.1 The eDNA results for all three ponds returned negative results, hence it can be assumed great crested newts are absent from these waterbodies (see Appendix 1).

4 SUMMARY

- 4.1.1 The field surveys confirmed the results of previous newts surveys within these ponds which suggests an absence of great crested newts.



REFERENCES

Biggs et al. 2014 *Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt*. DEFRA Guidance Note WC1067.



Legend:

External extent of application site (approx.)



Drawing No: Figure 1

Title: Pond Locations

Date: November 2025

Project: Employment Land

Client: L & G



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Appendix 1

eDNA Analysis



Folio No: 3506-2025
Purchase Order: 4834
Contact: Wild Care (Derek Finnie Associates)
Issue Date: 09.07.2025
Received Date: 02.07.2025

GCN Report

Technical Report



SureScreen Scientifics

Folio No: 3506-2025
Purchase Order: 4834
Contact: Wild Care (Derek Finnie Associates)
Issue Date: 09.07.2025
Received Date: 02.07.2025

GCN eDNA Analysis

Summary

When great crested newts (GCN), *Triturus cristatus*, inhabit a pond, they continuously release small amounts of their DNA into the environment. By collecting and analyzing water samples, we can detect these small traces of environmental DNA (eDNA) to confirm GCN habitation or establish GCN absence.

Results

Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Degradation Check	Inhibition Check	Result	Positive Replicates
GCN25 1588	Horsham - P1	TQ 20185 33488	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12
						
						
						
GCN25 7447	Horsham - P25	TQ 20024 33674	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12
GCN25 7451	Horsham - P29	TQ 20091 33642	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12

Matters affecting result: none

Reported by: Amy Bermudez

Approved by: Consuela Sopronyi

Methodology

The samples detailed above have been analyzed for the presence of GCN eDNA following the protocol stated in DEFRA WC1067 'Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt, Appendix 5.' (Biggs et al. 2014). Each of the 6 sub-sample tubes are first centrifuged and pooled together into a single sample tube which then undergoes DNA extraction. The extracted sample is then analyzed using real-time PCR (qPCR), which uses species-specific molecular markers to amplify GCN DNA within a sample. These markers are unique to GCN DNA, meaning that there should be no detection of closely related species.

If GCN DNA is present, the DNA is amplified up to a detectable level, resulting in positive species detection. If GCN DNA is not present then amplification does not occur, and a negative result is recorded. Analysis of eDNA requires attention to detail to prevent the risk of contamination. True positive controls, negative controls, and spiked synthetic DNA are included in every analysis and these have to be correct before any result is declared and reported. Stages of the DNA analysis are also conducted in different buildings at our premises for added analytical security.

SureScreen Scientifics Ltd is ISO9001 accredited and participates in Natural England's proficiency testing scheme for GCN eDNA testing.

Interpretation of Results

Sample Integrity Check:

When samples are received in the laboratory, they are inspected for any tube leakage, suitability of sample (not too much mud or weed etc.) and absence of any factors that could potentially lead to inconclusive results. Any samples which fail this test are rejected and eliminated before analysis.

Degradation Check:

Pass/Fail. Analysis of the spiked DNA marker to see if there has been degradation of the kit or sample between the date it was made to the date of analysis. Degradation of the spiked DNA marker may lead indicate a risk of false negative results.

Inhibition Check:

Pass/Fail. The presence of inhibitors within a sample is assessed using a DNA marker. If inhibition is detected, samples are purified and re-analyzed. Inhibitors cannot always be removed, if the inhibition check fails, the sample should be re-collected.

Result:

Presence of GCN eDNA (Positive/Negative/Inconclusive)

Positive: GCN DNA was identified within the sample, indicative of GCN presence within the sampling location at the time the sample was taken or within the recent past at the sampling location.

Positive Replicates: Number of positive qPCR replicates out of a series of 12. If one or more of these are found to be positive the pond is declared positive for GCN presence. It may be assumed that small fractions of positive analyses suggest low level presence, but this cannot currently be used for population studies. In accordance with the WC1067 Natural England protocol, even a score of 1/12 is declared positive. 0/12 indicates negative GCN presence.

Negative: GCN eDNA was not detected or is below the threshold detection level and the test result should be considered as evidence of GCN absence, however, does not exclude the potential for GCN presence below the limit of detection.

Inconclusive: Controls indicate inhibition or degradation of the sample, resulting in the inability to provide conclusive evidence for GCN presence or absence.

