

Consultee Response

Case Ref: DC/25/1023	Date: 04 September 2025
From: NatureSpace	Response: Licence recommended
This planning application is for: Relocation of existing farm yard manure storage, construction of a silage clamp and construction of a slurry lagoon incorporating importation and use of materials and all associated engineering works Summary - 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 25 ponds within 500m of the development proposal, the closest of which is located adjacent to the site - There are several historical great crested newt records within 500m - Natural England Standing Advice guidance for local planning authorities advises that surveys on ponds up to 500m from development sites should be requested.  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 are 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. Ecological Information The applicant has provided an ecological report, “<i>Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Danefold Farm, The Ecology Co-op, June 2025</i>”. Within this report it states that: - “<i>Habitats on site are comprised of modified grassland with a parcel located to the centre of the field and a separate parcel of modified grassland located adjacent to a mesh wired fence. The grassland fields are bounded by native mixed species hedgerows to all aspects</i>”	

- *"A number of ponds have been identified within 250m of the site."*
- *"The ponds were considered to provide suitability to breeding and aquatic stage great crested newts (GCN). The wider habitats were of mixed suitability with the woodland parcels considered to offer good terrestrial suitability for GCN with the arable fields with lower sward heights offering limited value to terrestrial GCN and other amphibians. EDNA analysis confirmed presence of GCN within ponds 2 and 3."*
- *"As the proposed development seeks to significantly alter the existing topography of the site (the largest elevation change is considered to be ~1.0m) to create the lagoon and bunker features, it is considered likely that a mitigation licence would be required. In order to secure a mitigation licence further surveys may be required, it may however be possible to join a district level licencing scheme to secure an appropriate mitigation licence."*

Conclusion

We are in agreement with the above report which states that due to onsite and surrounding habitats, and due to positive eDNA results, a licence will be required for this development to ensure great crested newts are dealt with appropriately.

The applicant has two licensing options which require further information to satisfy the LPA that great crested newts can be dealt with. Either:

- **The District Licensing route can be used** - in order to demonstrate that the impacts of the proposed development can be addressed through the Council's District Licence, a NatureSpace Report or Certificate must be submitted prior to determination. This method of licensing removes the need for survey work and provides compensatory habitats off site. This would provide certainty for 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
- **The European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) route** can be taken - this may involve surveying* for great crested newts in the surrounding ponds and submitting a mitigation plan to the LPA to show how impacts on the species can be adequately addressed. This should be submitted prior to determination.

* 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). Appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures will then 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

Contact details: 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

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 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”*.