

Great Crested Newt (GCN) Risk Assessment and Precautionary Measures Note

Creation of External Play Area

Wyvern Technology College, Botley Road, Fair Oak, Hampshire SO50 7AN

1. Introduction

This Great Crested Newt (GCN) Risk Assessment and Precautionary Measures Note has been prepared in support of the proposed creation of an external play area at Wyvern Technology College.

The note has been prepared in response to consultation comments regarding the potential presence of Great Crested Newts associated with ponds located within the nearby Wyvern College Meadows & Ponds Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

The purpose of this assessment is to consider the likelihood of Great Crested Newts occurring within the application site, evaluate the potential risks arising from the proposed development, and identify appropriate precautionary measures to ensure that potential harm to protected species is avoided.

2. Site Context

The application site comprises an area of existing amenity grassland within the operational grounds of Wyvern Technology College.

The grassland is regularly mown and managed for recreational use and is characterised by:

- Short mown amenity grass.
- An absence of ponds or wetland features.
- A lack of scrub, rough grassland or woodland edge habitat.
- An absence of refugia features such as log piles, rubble piles, dense vegetation or other sheltered habitat suitable for amphibians.

The site is situated within an established school environment and is influenced by surrounding buildings, hard surfaced areas, pedestrian routes and managed landscape features.

The habitat within the proposed development footprint is therefore considered to consist of species-poor amenity grassland of low ecological value and sub-optimal terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts.

3. Great Crested Newt Risk Assessment

Records indicate the presence of Great Crested Newts within ponds associated with Wyvern College Meadows & Ponds SINC, located approximately 120m south-west of the proposed play area.

Whilst this places the application site within the broad terrestrial range over which Great Crested Newts may disperse, the suitability of the site for regular occupation is considered limited for the following reasons:

- The affected habitat comprises highly managed amenity grassland with limited foraging value.
- No breeding habitat is present within or immediately adjacent to the development area.
- The site lacks suitable sheltering and hibernation features.
- Ecological connectivity between the known breeding ponds and the application site is restricted by intervening school buildings, hard surfacing, access routes and managed grounds.
- The proposed works affect only a small area of low-value habitat.

Taking these factors into account, the likelihood of regular use of the application site by Great Crested Newts is considered low.

The potential risk of killing, injuring or disturbing individual Great Crested Newts during construction is therefore considered negligible, provided that appropriate precautionary measures are implemented.

4. Precautionary Measures

In recognition of the proximity of known Great Crested Newt populations, the following precautionary measures will be adopted during construction:

Site Briefing

All contractors and site personnel will be made aware of the potential presence of amphibians and the legal protection afforded to Great Crested Newts prior to commencement of works.

Vegetation Clearance

Any vegetation removal required as part of the proposed works will be undertaken progressively and during daylight hours to allow any amphibians present to move away naturally from the working area.

Storage of Materials

Construction materials, equipment and spoil will be stored on hardstanding where possible and not left on vegetated areas for extended periods where they could create temporary refuges for amphibians.

Excavations

Any excavations left open overnight will either be covered or fitted with suitable escape ramps. Open excavations will be checked each morning before works re-commence.

Good Site Practice

The construction area will be maintained in a tidy condition throughout the works, with waste materials and debris removed regularly to avoid the creation of sheltering opportunities for amphibians.

Unexpected Discovery Procedure

Should a Great Crested Newt or amphibian suspected to be a Great Crested Newt be encountered during construction:

- Works will cease immediately in the affected area.
- The animal will not be handled or disturbed.
- A suitably qualified ecologist will be contacted for advice.
- Works will only re-commence once appropriate guidance has been received.

5. Conclusion

The proposed development is located within an area of intensively managed amenity grassland that provides habitat of low ecological value and is considered sub-optimal for Great Crested Newts.

Although Great Crested Newts are known to occur within ponds approximately 120m from the development site, the application area lacks suitable breeding habitat, refugia and

significant foraging opportunities. Connectivity between the site and the known breeding ponds is further constrained by existing school infrastructure and areas of hard surfacing.

Given the small scale of the proposal, the low suitability of the affected habitat and the implementation of the precautionary measures outlined above, the risk of impacts to Great Crested Newts is considered negligible.

It is therefore concluded that the proposal is unlikely to result in harm to Great Crested Newts or give rise to an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).