

Land South of Mortimers Lane, Fair Oak

Response to Naturespace

edp7852_r023

QA: MNe/TWi_LLI/FMi_230525

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This note has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Bloor Homes Limited in relation to Land South of Mortimers Lane (hereafter referred to as 'the Application Site'). It has been produced in response to comments raised by Naturespace in relation to the planning application for the Application Site (planning reference O/24/98619).
- 1.2 This note deals with matters raised relating specifically to great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*), and provides an update in terms of survey work, including the methodology, results and conclusions of Environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys undertaken in April 2025.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As outlined with the Ecological Appraisal produced by EDP (edp7852_r011, November 2024), an initial assessment of the Application Site's suitability to support great crested newt was undertaken during the Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey and with reference to desk study records. No waterbodies are present within the Application Site, however, a number of waterbodies are present within the local area.
- 2.2 It is noted that a number of newly constructed attenuation ponds are now present to the north of the Application Site, associated with the residential development at Pembers Hill Farm (ref. RM/18/83278). As such, the number of ponds identified within 250m of the Application Site now stands at 12 (see **Plan EDP 1**), with a total of 16 within 500m.
- 2.3 During ecology survey work in 2023, waterbodies within 250m of the Application Site were to be assessed to establish the presence of great crested newt within the Application Site/local area. However, no response was received from the pond access request letters sent in spring 2023, and therefore access was not granted to conduct the surveys. Should no access be possible, the Ecological Assessment concluded that a District Level Licence (DLL) would be a suitable alternative to eDNA and aquatic surveys.
- 2.4 In kind, Naturespace responded to the application submission on 03 February 2025 with 'Licence Recommended', stating:

"I agree with the conclusion of the ecological report (edp, November 2024) and that due to the nearby ponds being inaccessible, the applicant can utilise the Council's District Licence

scheme. There are ponds within 250m of the proposed development that have not been surveyed due to access not being granted, therefore the status of great crested newts is not known. Some of these ponds are located within 50m of the site."

- 2.5 Since that time, a suite of eDNA surveys have been undertaken for all ponds within 250m of the Site. The methodology, results and conclusions of these surveys are discussed below.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL DNA SAMPLING OF WATERBODIES

Methodology

- 3.1 eDNA is DNA that is collected from the environment in which an organism lives. In aquatic environments, animals including amphibians shed cellular material into the water via their saliva, urine, faeces, skin cells, etc. This eDNA may persist for several weeks, and can be collected through a water sample, and analysed to determine if the target species of interest is/has been present in the waterbody. eDNA sampling of waterbodies between 15 April and 30 June (inclusive) gives a highly reliable indication of the presence or likely absence of great crested newt.
- 3.2 eDNA sampling was undertaken on all waterbodies within 500m of the Application Site (but not separated from the Site by significant dispersal barriers) to which access was granted. A total of 12 ponds were accessed, with four ponds to the south-east of the Application Site discounted due to being beyond 250m from the Application Site boundary and separated from the Application Site by a stream.
- 3.3 With reference to **Plan EDP 1** the waterbodies accessed are **P1 – P12**. The sampling was undertaken on 16 April 2025, using sampling kits obtained from SureScreen Scientifics and following a standard protocol set out by the Freshwater Habitats Trust which is approved by Natural England. Briefly, this protocol involves (per waterbody):
- Collecting 20 water samples from selected areas evenly spread around the accessible perimeter of the waterbody, including both open water and vegetated areas;
 - Collecting a ladle of water at each sampling location, stirring the water column without stirring up sediment during collection;
 - Shaking and inverting the combined samples thoroughly once all 20 ladles are collected; and
 - Extracting 15ml of this mixed sample into six conical tubes, each containing preservative fluid, a shaking thoroughly to homogenize the sample.
- 3.4 The water samples were then sent to SureScreen Scientifics be analysed for great crested newt eDNA, using real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR).

Limitations

- 3.5 A total of 12 ponds were accessed, of which only seven were recorded to be holding sufficient water. The five dry waterbodies were newly created attenuation basins/swales

and woodland pond associated with Pembers Hill development to the north of the Application Site. Given the attenuations basins are newly created, and all ponds are well separated from the Application Site by existing development, this is not considered a significant limitation to the survey work.

Results

- 3.6 The results of the surveys of waterbodies are set out in **Table EDP 3.1**. These should be read in conjunction with **Plan EDP 1**. In summary, no evidence of great crested newt was recorded during any of the surveys undertaken.

Table EDP 3.1: GCN eDNA Survey Results

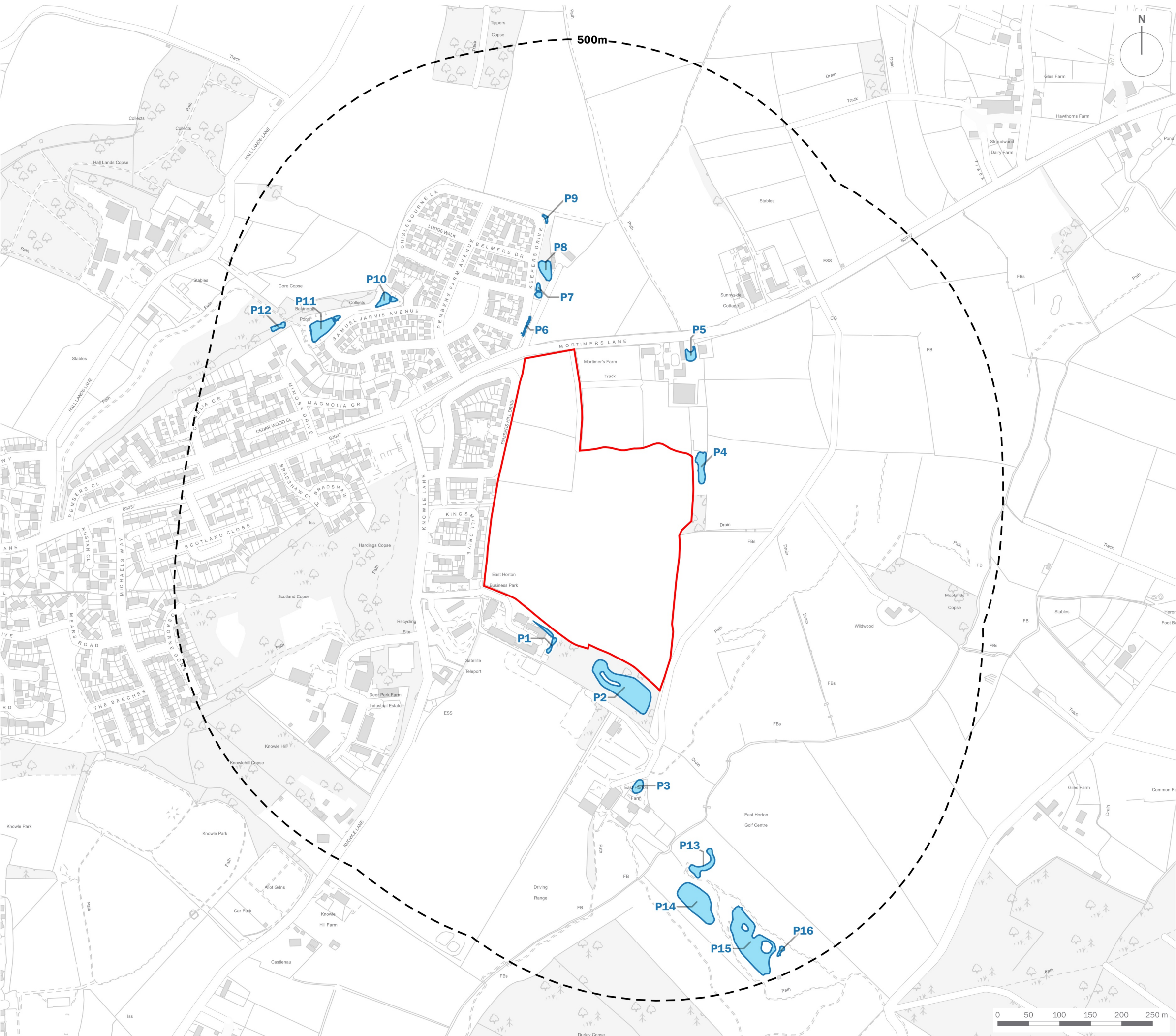
Waterbody Ref. No.	eDNA Result
P1	Negative
P2	Negative
P3	Negative
P4	Negative
P5	Negative
P6	Dry
P7	Dry
P8	Dry
P9	Dry
P10	Negative
P11	Negative
P12	Dry

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 No opportunities for breeding great crested newt are present within the Application Site. Whilst suboptimal opportunities for great crested newt in their terrestrial phase are present within the Application Site, all ponds within at least 250m of the Application Site Boundary either returned a negative eDNA result or were dry in mid-April (and therefore unsuitable for great crested newt breeding). Great crested newt are therefore concluded to be absent from at the Application Site and the immediate local area, and no mitigation is therefore required in respect of the proposed development.

Plans

Plan EDP 1: eDNA Survey 2025
(edp7852_d043 23 May 2025 PDr/MNe)



Site Boundary

Pond

P1

Pond Number

client			
Bloor Homes Limited			
project title			
Land south of Mortimers Lane, Fair Oak			
drawing title			
eDNA Survey 2025			
date	23 MAY 2025	drawn by	PDr
drawing number	edp7852_d043	checked	MNe
scale	1:6,000 @ A3	QA	DJo