

**Biodiversity statement: 14/04/2023**

**Prepared by: Sarah Harrington-James, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership**

**For: Finch's, Kingsdown Road, Kingsdown, Sittingbourne ME9 0RA**

A 2.9-acre stock-fenced area of permanent pasture owned by Finch's and occasionally grazed by a small flock of Hebridian sheep is the location for a proposed 150m<sup>2</sup> lined wildlife pond. This is outside of the local conservation area.

**Map** – showing Finch's and the proposed site of the 150m<sup>2</sup> pond creation is marked with a dot.



The proposed spot at approximate grid reference TQ9332 5969 is a natural dip in the landscape and has a geology of Seaford chalk formation with superficial deposits of clay/silt and flints (British Geological Survey). Therefore, we have advised the landowner that a heavy-duty liner with geotextile underlay is a necessity so that the pond holds water all year round. The field is free of any land-based designations.

The field boundaries to the west of the proposed pond location are made up of mainly elder, oak, hawthorn and some mature poplar. The northern and western boundaries are a dense native hedgerow, which creates a fantastic 'green corridor' for amphibians to reach any new pond. The landowner under a Woodland Trust grant has planted a new woodland north-west of the proposed pond site.

The field also has a small copse of silver birch to the north-east and a few mature specimen trees such as walnut with some newly planted saplings - most of which are fenced by post and rail with rabbit netting to protect them. A fairly new post and rail fence divides the land west and east as the eastern section is owned by a different landowner who grazes his livestock here.

The rough grassland within this field has no particular ground flora of note, apart from clover. The area nearer the garden to Finch's has also been recently fenced off and the grass left long for wildlife where several small saplings have been planted. In relation to protected species, NBN Atlas ([www.nbnatlas.org](http://www.nbnatlas.org)) shows that within a 1km radius of this site only common pipistrelle has been recorded.



*Left: View north showing the proposed pond creation site – a natural dip in the land.*

The chosen area is large enough to accommodate a 150m<sup>2</sup> pond and spoil. The spoil will be spread thinly around the excavation site. The land gradually slopes down towards a

natural shallow dip in the landscape which is marked on the image above with a blue star. This should help to capture any run-off and feed the pond.



*Left: View south towards Finch's showing one of the dense hedgerow boundaries.*

The site has good interconnecting habitat made up mainly of hedgerows, mature trees, scrub and rough grassland. This creates excellent green corridors for all sorts of creatures to move around safely, shelter and forage, including newts. Newts while terrestrial over winter are likely to hide in damp areas such as ditches and

hedgerows in this field and will come out to feed on milder days.

Approximately 850m north-east of this proposed pond site around Ludgate there is a fringe and core area for Great Crested Newts, a European Protected Species, meaning they have either been found during Natural England Class Licence Surveys or are known to be moving from pond to pond. GCN can travel up to 500m a night during breeding season so there is a chance that they could eventually colonise any new pond created here. As part of Natural England's District Level Licensing Scheme for

GCN, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership restored a large pond at Bumpit Farm, Bogle/Lynsted area which is around 1.4 miles north-east from this proposed pond site.

As there are a limited number of large, deep and fish-free ponds locally that hold water all year round, mainly due to unsuitable geology or arable farmland, there is an argument to create a new and permanent water source at this location. It will not only benefit the local amphibian population, but a whole host of other wildlife too such as woodland/farmland bird species, an array of insects and mammals.

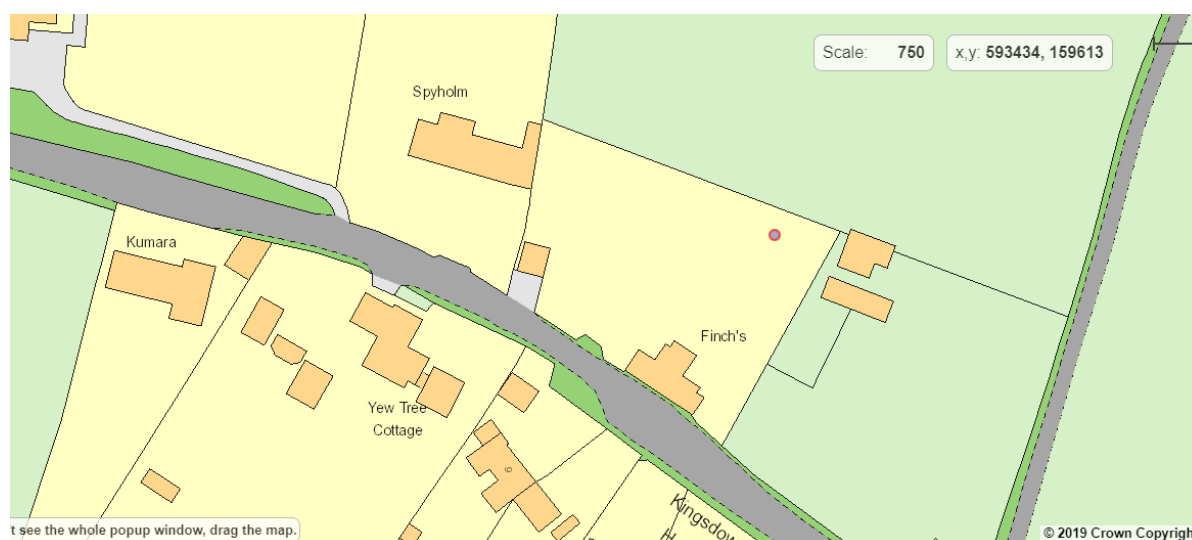


*Left: Overall view of field looking north from the proposed pond location. The small silver birch copse can be seen in the background which once formed part of an old field boundary line.*

The proposed pond will have a natural fluid form (like a kidney shape, for example) following the contours of the surrounding landscape. It will be lined and of 150m<sup>2</sup>

in size. The maximum depth is likely to be 2m at its deepest point with several shelves for aquatic plants to root into (as a topsoil layer will be added to the liner) and ideally shallow margins starting at 1:10. The pond is left to naturalise and no species (plant or amphibian) are introduced. It will also not be used as a translocation pond.

A second smaller 4m x 5m (20m<sup>2</sup>) lined pond is proposed in the back garden of Finch's so that the owners can enjoy watching the wildlife visit in close proximity (map below shows location of pond with a blue dot). This is approximately 25m from the house. Although likely to come under permitted development, it is mentioned within this planning application because it sits within a conservation area and Finch's is a Grade II Listed building. Please see separate Heritage Statement.





*Left: Photo looking south towards Finch's showing the overall area for the small garden pond (rough ground/bare soil).*

*Below: Photo looking north of the proposed garden pond area and the boundary with the field beyond.*

Entrance to the area for machinery (360 excavator) is from Ludgate Road and then through a series of farm gates into the field. Works, which are expected to take approximately 5 days, will only take place once the ground conditions are suitable during autumn-winter 2023. This is outside of bird nesting season and when there will be little or no disturbance to



amphibians; however, all work should take place with a view to causing least harm to *any* species. Contractors will have a 'toolbox talk' regarding protected species before works take place.