



*Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)  
Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs)  
Method Statement*

at

**Longwood Cart lodge,**

**Chelmondiston**

**Suffolk, IP9 1HP**

**Carried out for:**

**Mr and Mrs Colin & Zoe Lees**

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## **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 DCS Ecology was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Colin & Zoe Lees, to produce a Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) Method Statement for an application at the proposed Longwood Cart lodge, Chelmondiston Suffolk, IP9 1HP development (central grid reference TM19843770), hereafter referred to as the Site.
- 1.2 The site is approximately 500 square metres, comprised of a building surrounded by amenity grassland, ornamental planting areas, hard standing, and hedgerows.
- 1.3 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was carried out on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2022 by Thomas Jordan of Abrehart Ecology Ltd. The PEA recommended that works should follow a Reasonable Avoidance Measures method statement for great crested newts (GCN), to prevent harm to individual amphibians.
- 1.4 Desk top searches found no records of great crested newts within 6km of the site (the searches were done by SBIS for Abrehart Ecology's PEA and DCS Ecology using licence returns from MAGIC EPS records).
- 1.5 The LPA requires a GCN RAMs prior to commencement as a planning condition.

## 2 Introduction

### Background

- 2.1 DCS Ecology was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Colin & Zoe Lees, to produce a Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) Method Statement for an application at the proposed Longwood Cart lodge, Chelmondiston Suffolk, IP9 1HP development (central grid reference TM19843770), hereafter referred to as the Site.
- 2.2 The desk top survey by DCS ecology Ltd found no great crested newt records within 6km of the sites.
- 2.3 Data provided by Suffolk Biological Information Service to Abrehart Ecology Ltd returned **NO** great crested newt record within 2km of the site.
- 2.4 The **desk top** surveys aimed to ascertain the presence or likely absence of great crested newts using the Site, or within 500m **and greater**. Therefore, a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence Rapid Risk Assessment calculated to impacts **negligible** with a Risk Avoidance Measure Statement (RAMS).
- 2.5 Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) detailed within this report will be followed before and throughout the construction process. This will reduce the likelihood of harming animals (including great crested newts) to a negligible level.

### Legislative Context

- 2.6 Great crested newts are a European Protected Species and a Species of Principle Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006). They are fully protected under UK and European legislation, making it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
  - Kill, injure, or take great crested newts (or their eggs);
  - Possess, sell, transport or control alive or dead great crested newt or any part of them;
  - Damage or destroy any breeding or resting place;
  - Obstruct access to a resting or shelter place.
- 2.7 Great crested newts are also listed on the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, as Suffolk is believed to be a stronghold for this species.
- 2.8 If great crested newts are recorded within 500m of the Site, then a license may be needed from Natural England prior to undertaking any work which may affect them.

## Site description

- 2.9 The Site is located approximately 350m north-west of the village of Chelmondiston, Suffolk. The proposed construction zone is approximately 500 square meters in extent comprising of an existing cart lodge surrounded by garden areas consisting of ornamental planting, species poor hedgerows, mature trees, amenity grassland, and hard standing. Other adjacent habitats of interest include further residential gardens and areas of agricultural land.
- 2.10 The surrounding area is dominated by arable land including ditches and hedgerows. Approximately 60 meters to the north is Page's Common, a public greenspace area and the river Orwell is approximately 1km north of the Site (see Figure 1).
- 2.11 A map showing pond locations can be found in Appendix I.

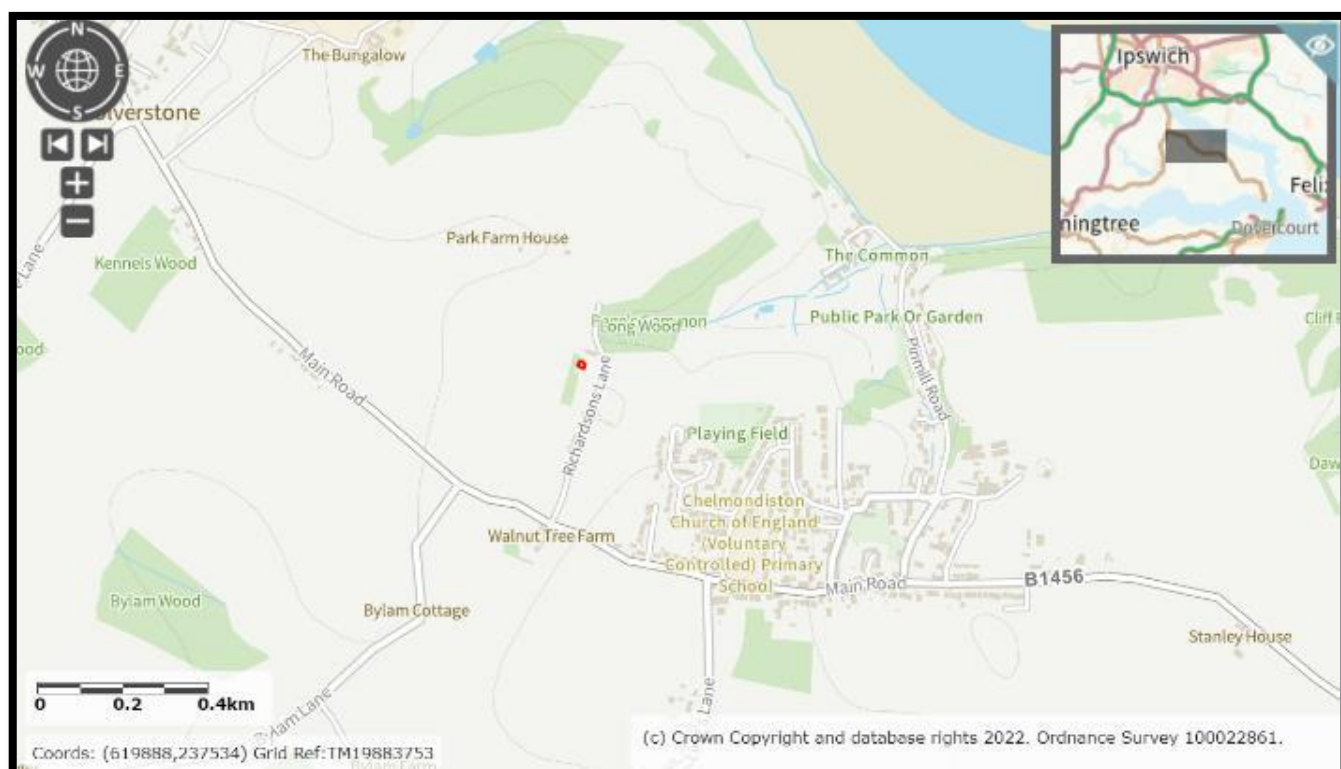


Figure 1. Site location (outlined in red). Based upon Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright under licence 100064616

## **Great Crested Newt Ecology**

- 2.12 Great crested newts are distributed throughout the UK but are absent from Ireland. Despite a wide distribution, populations have reduced or disappeared from sites across Europe as a result of habitat loss and changes in farming practices (Froglife, 2017).
- 2.13 The great crested newt is the largest newt in the UK, reaching a length of up to 17cm. Male great crested newts develop a jagged crest along their backs during breeding season with a break at the base of the abdomen and a silvery flash along the center of the tail. Both males and females have dark skin, with a ‘warty’ appearance, and orange underside with irregular black markings and white speckling. During their terrestrial phase the male loses his crest, however the female retains her orange tail stripe (Froglife, 2017; Inns, 2009).
- 2.14 Like other UK amphibian species, great crested newts use suitable waterbodies for breeding (often between March and June). Large ponds, with egg laying substrate (weeds, aquatic plants, grasses etc.) and no fish are favored sites (Froglife, 2017). Whilst in their aquatic phase, great crested newts feed on invertebrates and tadpoles, relying on smell and vision to find their prey (Beebee, 2013).
- 2.15 Courtship and mating take place at night and female newts lay eggs individually on plant leaves, which are folded to protect the egg. Adults leave breeding ponds in July, with young newts remaining within ponds until August (Inns, 2009).
- 2.16 During their terrestrial phase (late summer, autumn, and winter) great crested newts feed on invertebrates and spend the majority of winter months sheltering beneath rocks, buried in mud, or within compost heaps (Froglife, 2017). Favored terrestrial habitats include deciduous woodland, mature hedgerows, and undisturbed grassland (Inns, 2009).



## 3 Methods

### Desk Study

- 3.1 Data obtained from the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) were used to conduct a standard data search<sup>1</sup> for any information regarding statutory and non-statutory sites and records of protected and priority species within a 2km radius of the Site. The data were received on the 29th of June 2022
- 3.2 A data search of MAGIC EPS records came back with no licence returns within 6km of the site, the search was carried out on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2023.

### Great Crested Newt Survey

#### Habitat Assessment

- 3.3 Habitats recorded on the Site were suitable to support amphibians, including great crested newts (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*), during their terrestrial phases.
- 3.4 There were 4 potential breeding ponds highlighted within the local area (500m proximity of the Site, see Appendix I) during the desk study. This included one pond located 60m north of the site.
- 3.5 No Access was granted to survey ponds (as per Abrehart Ecology PEA report)
- 3.6 **Pond 1:** Located approx. 60m to the north of site.
- 3.7 **Pond 2:** Approx. 450m northeast of site was noted that the habitat of Paes common and Longwood were between the pond and the site.
- 3.8 **Pond 3:** A roadside pond located approx. 380m south of site and has a main road acting as a barrier between habitats.
- 3.9 **Pond 4:** A drainage ditch located approx.480m south of site.
- 3.10 As the development will include the disturbance of small areas of habitats (through the conversion of the building) and will retain the majority of scrub, grassland, trees, and ditches (foraging, sheltering, and hibernation habitats) in the surrounding habitat, it is considered that the development can proceed under a Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) method statement.
- 3.11 Furthermore, potential breeding habitats (ditches, pools, and wetland) will not be impacted by the proposals and will not be connected to pond one.

## 4 Reasonable Avoidance Measures

### Habitats to be Impacted by works:

- 4.1 The development will include the disturbance of small areas of habitats and will retain all scrub, grassland, and trees, (foraging, sheltering, and hibernation habitats) in the surrounding habitat.
- 4.2 The habitat to be impacted in the long term is zero as the conversion is on the footprint of the existing building.

### Avoidance Measures / Working Practices

#### Pre-construction

- 4.3 Sensitive vegetation clearance / a maintenance of very short sward height should be carried out prior to the start of works (at a height of <5cm). This will maintain the Site as sub-optimal / unsuitable for great crested newts and reduce the risk of harming animals when work commences.
- 4.4 Immediately prior to the commencement of construction works, a suitably licensed and experienced ecologist (the ECoW) should provide a Toolbox Talk to all site workers. This will cover identification of protected and common amphibian species and work through safe working practices.

#### Safe Working Practices

- 4.5 The Site Manager will be responsible for performing a thorough site check each morning to assess the condition of the working practices listed below.
- 4.6 All materials will be stored on pallets or raised from the ground. This will prevent places of refuge being created within the construction zone.
- 4.7 Any aggregates delivered to Site in bulk-bags should be stored and placed on pallets. Again, this will prevent places of refuge / hibernacula being created within the construction zone.
- 4.8 Heras or boundary site fencing should be erected at the boundaries of the construction zone to prevent site workers from entering ecologically sensitive areas – where great crested newts could be sheltering. Habitats which should be protected include pond margins, scrub, unmanaged grassland, and hedgerows/woodland.
- 4.9 Removed soil will be placed on surrounding areas (or other habitats/locations approved by the ECoW). Such habitats are not suitable for GCN and so would minimise the risk of harm to animals during work.
- 4.10 All waste should be stored in skips prior to removal from Site.
- 4.11 All excavations should contain an escape ramp, made from earth or wooden sticks (or multiple ramps within large excavations – to be determined by the ECoW). The Site Manager will check the excavations each morning. Should common amphibians be found, then these animals will be moved to safe habitat outside the construction zone (this habitat will be identified during the Toolbox Talk). If great crested newts are found within the excavations, then a suitably licensed ecologist will be contacted and discussions for future methods/works will take place.
- 4.12 All heavy plant movement will be confined to hard standing / bare earth habitats. Machinery will not enter ecologically sensitive areas – such as long grassland, scrub, or tall ruderal vegetation.



## 5 Habitat Enhancement Opportunities

- 5.1 The Site could be enhanced for amphibians, including populations of great crested newts possibly using adjacent habitats.
- 5.2 Low level shrub planting would provide valuable sheltering, foraging, and commuting habitat for amphibians. Low-growing shrubs would offer the greatest protection for amphibians. Any plants should be native species and of local provenance.
- 5.3 Incorporating log piles into landscaped areas, such as shrub beds, would add shelter and hibernation opportunities for amphibians.

## 6 References

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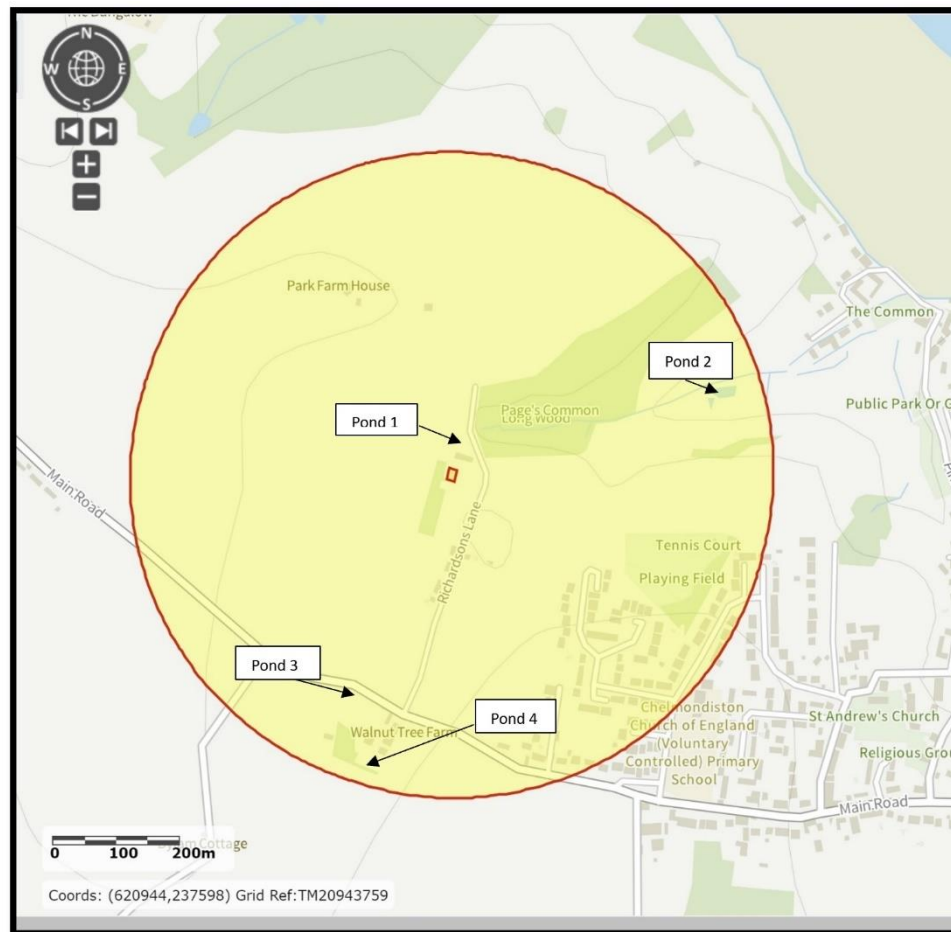
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<http://www.magic.gov.uk.html>

<https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/gcn-licensing-reform/436-ne-gcn-dll-guidance-march19/file>

## Appendix I – Site Maps

### 500m radius pond map



Pond Map 500m. Based upon Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright under licence 100064616