



**Precautionary Method Statement -
Great Crested Newts**

**Annex at Seaman's Farm
Littlebury Green
Saffron Walden
Essex**

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Declaration of compliance

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Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure this report accurately identifies potential ecological constraints to development or the likely presence or absence of species and the spatial and temporal use of the site by such species, it must only be viewed as a snap shot in time and reflects the ecological status of the site at the time of survey.

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Quality Assurance

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 An application to convert and extend an existing annexe, to create a habitable dwelling, at Seaman's Farm, Littlebury Green, Saffron Walden in Essex, has been approved by Uttlesford District Council under planning reference UTT/23/1253/FUL. Planning Condition 3 of that approval states;

"Prior to commencement of the development hereby approved, a Great Crested Newt Method Statement (GCNMS) shall be submitted in writing to the local planning authority for their written approval. The GCNMS shall contain precautionary mitigation measures and/or works to reduce potential impacts to Great Crested Newts during the construction phase. Thereafter, the GCNMS shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period in full accordance with the approved details."

1.1.2 In early 2023, in support of the planning application, Concord Ecology carried out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and, in April 2023, reported that the application site lies within the Natural England great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) (GCN) Amber Zone, indicating the possible presence of great crested newt populations, habitats and dispersal routes. Therefore, the precautionary GCNMS should be adhered to and is endorsed, through Planning Condition 3.

1.1.3 This GCNMS has been produced by Mr Keith Seaman, Principal Ecologist with ELMAW Consulting, who holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Studies; Agri-Ecosystem Management, a University Diploma in Ecology and a University Certificate of Ecology and Conservation. His professional qualifications include full membership of the Royal Society of Biology (RSB), registered as a Chartered Biologist and full membership of The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Keith Seaman also holds a Natural England Level 2 Class Survey Licence for great crested newts.

1.2 Site Context and Development

- 1.2.1 The application site is located at Seaman's Farm, in the village of Littlebury, near Saffron Walden, adjacent to Littlebury Green Road, at grid reference TL49173851. The application site is approximately 0.5ha in size and is comprised wholly of lawn; amenity grassland, trees and a timber-constructed building. Two ponds are located to the south of the application site, both within 100m of the building proposed for conversion.
- 1.2.2 It is proposed to convert the existing annexe into a new dwelling - it is also proposed to extend the building as well as create a new access driveway across the lawn.



Plate 1: Block Plan showing application site redline boundary

1.3 Responsibilities for Implementing the Works

- 1.3.1 The works will be carried out by the applicant unless otherwise stated in this GCNMS and the applicant will be responsible for the implementation of the Method Statement, with advice from the suitably qualified ecologist, where required.

2.0 Legislation and Planning Policies

2.1 *Legislation & Planning Policies relating to Great Crested Newts*

2.1.1 Great crested newts are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture (take) them
- Deliberately take or destroy their eggs
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, of great crested newts
- Posses, control or transport them alive or dead

2.1.2 Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is also an offence to:

- Disturb great crested newts while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection
- Obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection

2.1.3 Great crested newts are also listed as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

2.1.4 This GCNMS is produced to ensure that, when implemented, the building's conversion and driveway creation will not result in the harming of GCNs or the loss of their habitat.

3.0 Avoidance & Mitigation

3.1 *Mitigation Measures to Avoid Harming GCNs*

Timing

- There is currently no GCN terrestrial or aquatic sheltering or foraging habitat within the construction footprint. The site is within domestic lawn, regularly mown to a short height, precluding its use for shelter or foraging by GCNs. GCNs are active above ground generally between the months of February and November and therefore this area of mown grass must continue to be mown and kept very short, to avoid it becoming potential sheltering GCN habitat.
- At this time the site supports no GCN hibernation habitat and the proposed construction of both the access driveway and extension of the Annexe will not result in the loss of such habitat.
- The existing decking on the eastern elevation of the Annexe has a very low potential value to sheltering GCNs and therefore the cutting back of the decking will be carried out when GCNs are active above ground (February/March - October/November), weather dependent, and should the need arise, can be removed safely. Should GCNs be encountered during the cutting back of the existing decking, work would stop immediately and a GCN licensed ecologist engaged to assess and remove the GCNs, if appropriate.

3.2 *Pre-Construction Commencement*

- This GCNMS must be made available to all construction staff to ensure all are aware of the risk to GCNs and the avoidance measures prescribed to keep them safe during conversion works.
- A 2m-deep buffer zone will be maintained between the construction footprint and the surrounding habitat. This buffer zone should be clearly demarcated.

3.3 *During Construction*

- All vehicles entering the site must do so via the existing hard standing/graveled drive and only park on the driveway.
- Temporary site fencing such as Heras-type fencing should not be used with typical supporting footpads as these can create GCN shelter, particularly over soft ground such as lawns. Heras-type fencing legs should be either be sunk into the lawn and supported by stabilising support bars or zero trip stabilising bases should be used.
- All building materials must be stored either within the Annexe or the existing driveway; no materials are to be stored on the lawn.
- If stored overnight or between the months of February and November when GCNs are above ground and active, all building materials will be stored off-ground, either on pallets or in bags, to avoid creating GCN refuges.
- Building waste and/or detritus must be either removed immediately off-site or placed in skips which should be suspended above ground on battens.
- If possible, service trenches or pits should be filled-in before nightfall or should be checked in the morning for GCNs. Trenches left open at night should have ramps placed in the trenches to allow any wildlife to escape. Any GCNs found in the trenches should only be removed by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- If, at any time, GCNs are found within the construction footprint, works should stop and a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist contacted immediately for advice. Should it become necessary to encroach on potential GCN/semi-natural habitat, a suitably qualified ecologist's advice should be sought before continuing.