

**Great Crested Newt Assessment**

**Andoversford Service Station, Shipton Oliffe, A40  
Andoversford, Gloucestershire, GL54 4HS**

**Produced for Wyeth Projects Services for and on behalf  
of Motor Fuel Limited (MFG)**

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Drusilla Hall is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv). The code of professional conduct is subscribed to for all work.

Project	Author	Status	Date
Andoversford Ref: 23 0002	Drusilla Hall BSc (Hons) MCIEEM CEnv  GCN Licence: 2015-18908-CLS- CLS (Level II) Low Impact Class Licenced (LiCL) for GCN.	v.1.0 Final	January 2023

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Instruction and background**

Iceni Ecology Ltd. was instructed by Wyeth Projects Services for and on behalf of Motor Fuel Limited (MFG) 'the Client' to provide a great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) assessment relating to a proposed redevelopment at Andoversford Service Station, Shipton Oliffe, A40 Andoversford, Gloucestershire, GL54 4HS ('the site').

The proposals are for the redevelopment of the site to include five electric vehicle (EV) charging bays and associated control equipment, with new retail sales extensions to the south and to the west.

The Client submitted a planning application at the end of 2022 [22/03920/FUL] to Cotswold District Council. A 'Holding Objection' was returned by NatureSpace (the Council's biodiversity consultant) on 04/01/23 regarding GCN.

The following response was provided (summary and conclusion and recommendation for conditions):

### Summary

- The development falls within the amber impact risk zone for great crested newts. Impact risk zones have been derived through advanced modelling to create a species distribution map which predicts likely presence. In the amber impact zone, there is highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence.
- There are 6 ponds within 500m of the development proposal. The closest pond is 25m to the west of the site boundary, with 2 other ponds to the west, 2 ponds to the southeast and 1 pond to the south of the site.
- There is direct connectivity between the development and surrounding features in the landscape.
- Natural England Standing Advice guidance for local planning authorities advises that surveys on ponds up to 500m from development sites should be requested.

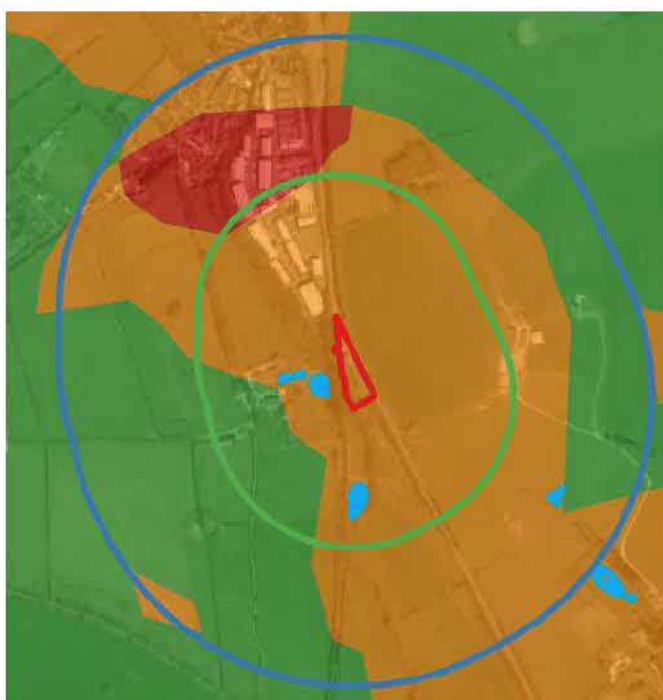


Figure above: Outline of the site (red) in the context of the surrounding landscape, including the Impact Risk Zones for GCN. Ponds are shown in light blue. A 250m buffer is shown around the site in green and a 500m buffer in blue.

### Conclusion and recommendation for conditions

We are not satisfied that the applicant has adequately demonstrated that there will no impact to great crested newts and/or their habitat as a result of the development being approved.

Due to the limited suitable habitat and the small size of the development, impacts of the development on great crested newts and/or their habitat are considered unlikely. It is recommended that a precautionary working statement in the form of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs)/Non-Licensed Method Statement (NLMS) strategy documents are completed by a suitably qualified ecologist to further reduce any risks.

If the applicant considers that they have licensable impacts, then the DL option is available.

This report provides a response to NatureSpace with respect to the Holding Objection.

The key objectives of this survey report are to address the comments from Place Services, and to:

Assess the suitability of the site to support GCN (terrestrial habitat).

Assess the likelihood of waterbodies (ponds) within the vicinity supporting GCN.

Provide recommendations for further GCN surveys, licensing or Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) if appropriate.

### Location and survey area

The site is located on the A40, Shipton Oliffe, Gloucestershire, centred on Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid Reference SP 02609 19044 (Figure 1).

The site comprises an operational service station with shop and hand jetwash, mainly of hardstanding and buildings, with a small area of woodland and tussocky grassland surrounding the working areas.

The site is located in a relatively rural area, with the A40 immediately east, beyond which is arable; woodland and light industrial to the north; woodland and the River Colne to the west, beyond which is arable and farms; and to the south woodland and arable. An aerial view of the site is shown as Figure 2.

**Figure 1: Location of site (centred on red marker)**

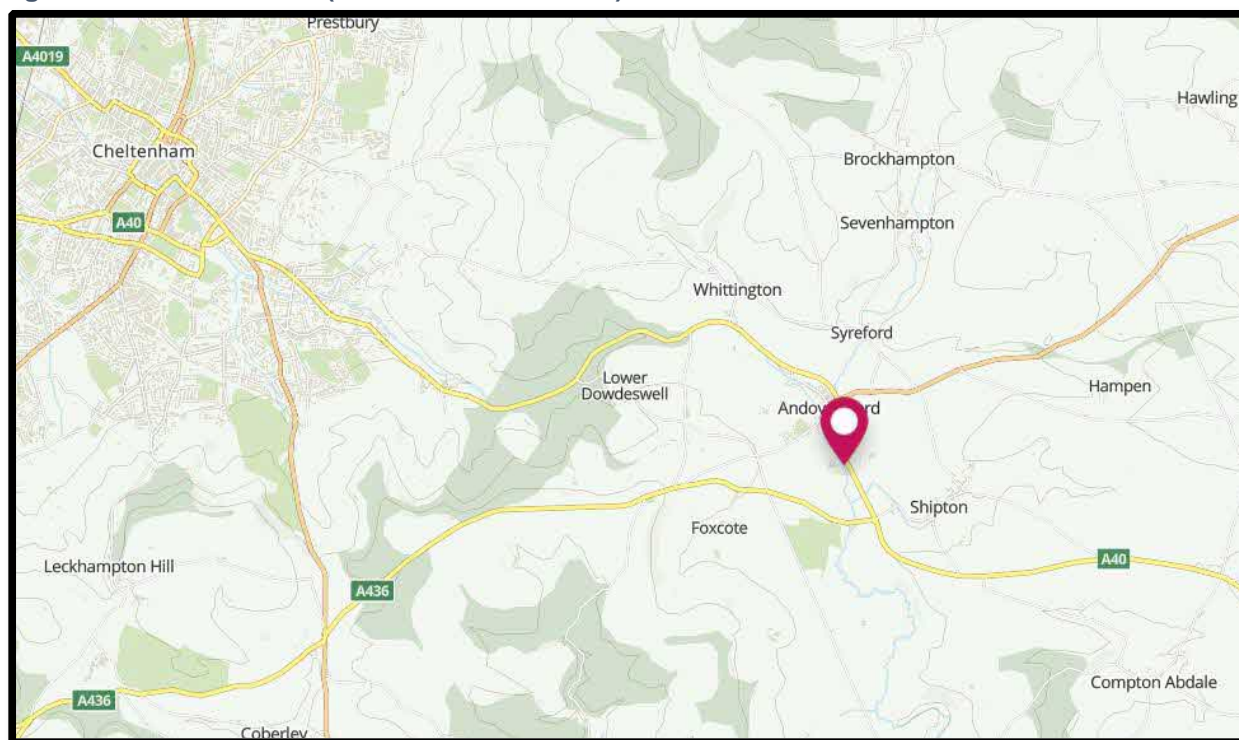
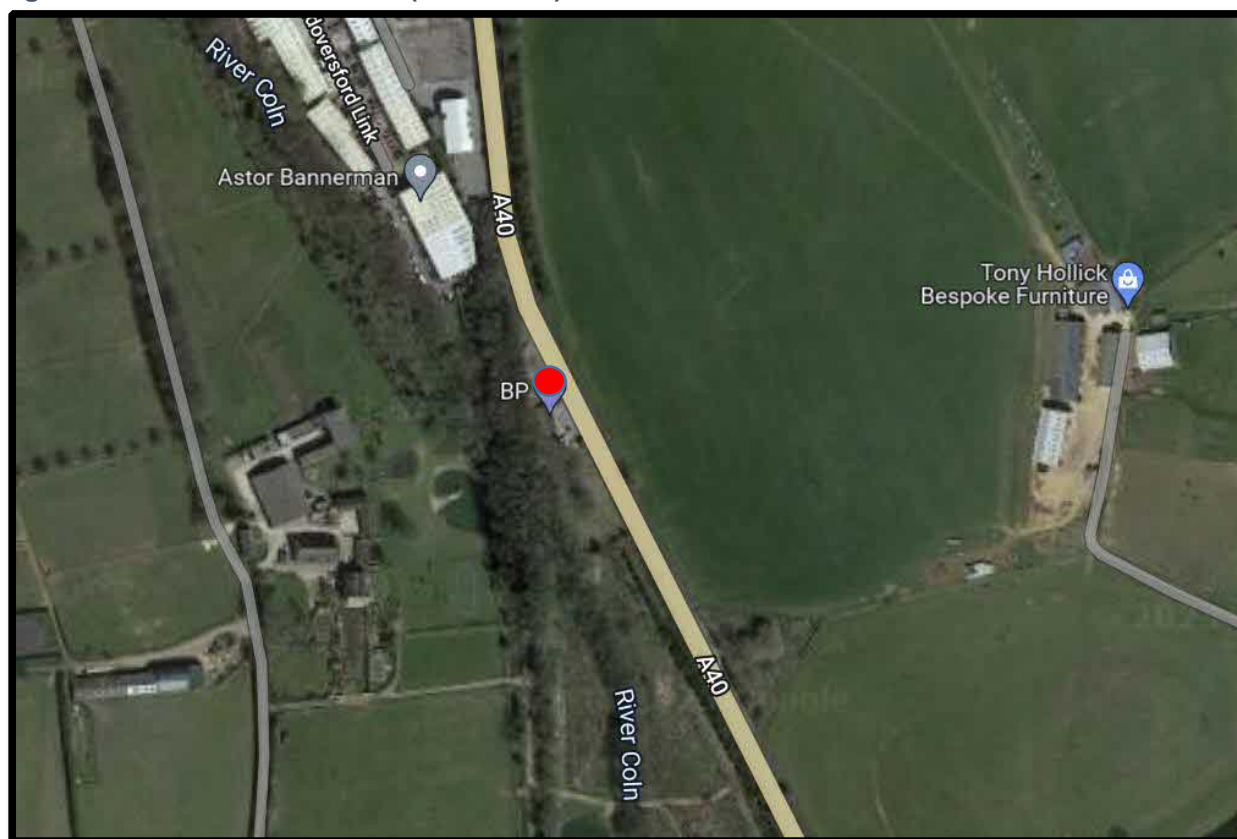


Figure 2: Aerial view of the site (red marker)



### Relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy

GCN are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)<sup>1</sup> and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)<sup>2</sup> [‘The Habitats Regulations’] making it a European Protected Species (EPS).

GCN use both aquatic and terrestrial habitat. Adults breed in ponds during the spring and then emerge onto land, spending the summer resting, foraging and dispersing before hibernating through the winter. ***Under wildlife legislation, both suitable aquatic and suitable terrestrial habitat is protected.***

GCN have been found to move over considerable distances from their breeding water bodies, however, the vast majority will inhabit an area much closer, and the exact distribution and migration patterns of newts on land depend on a variety of factors. The quality of terrestrial habitat near to breeding ponds is important, as are the lack of barriers to dispersal (such as fast-flowing rivers, or busy roads). ***Several studies have been conducted which reveal a great deal of variation, but GCN commonly move between ponds that are within 250m of each other<sup>3</sup>.***

<sup>1</sup> Amended by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012 S.I. 2012/1927.

<sup>3</sup> English Nature, 2001: Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines. Version: August 2001.

GCN are also listed under Section 41 of The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC), as a species of Principal Importance. Importantly, in the context of this document, NERC recognises the potential negative impact of development and places a duty on local planning authorities to ensure that all Species of Principal Importance are maintained in favourable conservation status when considering planning applications.

### **Status and distribution**

Although the GCN is still widespread in Britain, it has suffered major decline over the last century and much of its habitat is fragmented by unfavourable land use. The species are abundant locally in parts of lowland England, such as Kent, Sussex and East Anglia, while in much of the country it is scarce.



## **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

### **Desk study**

Web based resources<sup>4</sup> were used to determine the location of ponds on and within approximately 500m of the site. European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSML) and licence returns were also searched for.

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<sup>4</sup> MAGIC <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/>. and Ordnance Survey mapping.

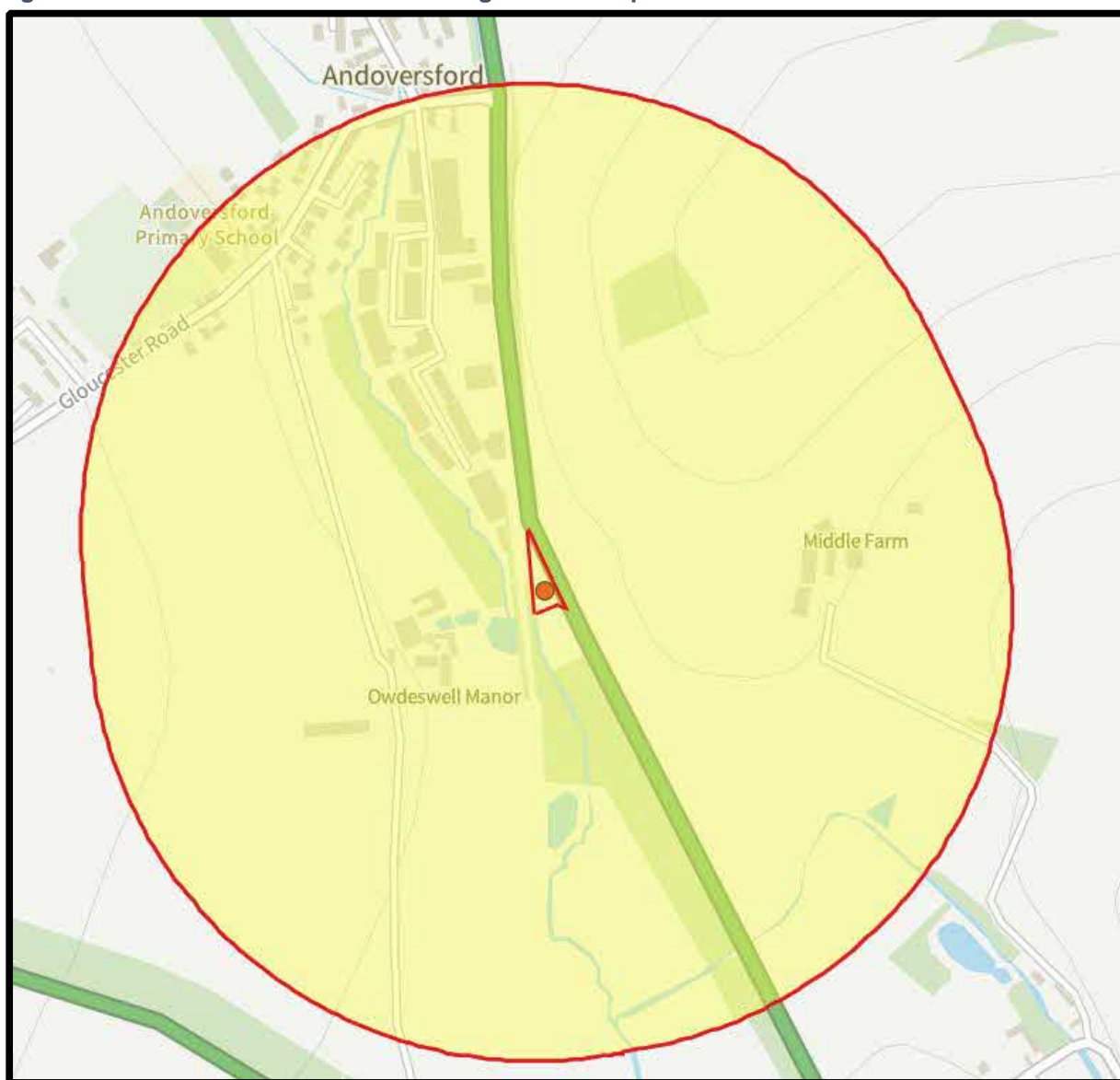
## RESULTS

### Desk study

#### *Ponds within 500m of the site*

The desk study identified five 'ponds' within 500m of the site, with no on-site ponds (Figure 3).

Figure 3: 500m buffer around site showing location of ponds. Source: MAGIC



The River Colne runs to the west of the site (north to south), and a tributary runs west to east under the A40 to the south of the site. This river system essentially separates four of the ponds from the site since GCN do not typically cross rivers.

This leaves a single triangular shaped pond at approximately 420m to the south-east of the site which appears from aerial photography to be a farm reservoir.

### ***GCN Records***

The GCN records shown on MAGIC within 2km of the site include a single 'GCN present' record from a pond survey at 1.9km east of the site, undertaken in 2018 south of Tottmoor.

There were no EPSML issued within 2km of the site for GCN.

## EVALUATION

A GCN assessment desk study was undertaken by Icen Ecology Ltd. of Andoversford Services, Shipton Oliffe, Gloucestershire, GL54 4HS with respect to GCN and proposals for small-scale redevelopment at the site. The assessment addresses the 'Holding Objection' from NatureSpace.

There are no onsite ponds; within 500m, five ponds were identified. Four of these ponds are cut off from the site by the River Colne and its tributaries (west and south of the site) since GCN do not typically cross rivers. A single pond, likely a farm reservoir, is located at approximately 420m south-east of the site.

The GCN records showed a single 'present' result (2018) for a pond just under 2km east of the site.

It is acknowledged that the site lies in an 'Amber' zone for GCN District Licencing (DL) purposes, but this does not translate that all habitat within this zone is deemed suitable for GCN and thus requires a licence.

The habitats on the site itself where redevelopment impacts will primarily occur are hardstanding, with some small areas of woodland and tussocky grassland habitat removal. These small areas of soft estate could potentially represent suitable terrestrial GCN habitat *if* GCN had a likelihood of utilising this habitat away from their breeding ponds; good habitat *per se* does not imply that GCN could be present.

GCN typically live in meta-populations, i.e. moving from one breeding pond to another during the breeding season. If GCN were to be breeding in the single reservoir pond outside the river network (i.e. 420m south-east of the site), GCN would be unlikely to move across the site to reach any other ponds, as there is no suitable corridor to accessible ponds. Furthermore, farm reservoirs are typically sub-optimal for GCN given their lack of vegetation for breeding. The small amount of soft estate habitat on the site at a distance of 420m from the reservoir pond to the site (assuming it did support breeding GCN) is not considered 'core habitat' given that studies have shown that GCN commonly move between ponds that are within 250m from each other.

Given the size of the proposed redevelopment and desk study conclusions, the predicted level of impact upon GCN from the proposed redevelopment is considered to be 'negligible' in the absence of mitigation. Therefore licensing, further surveys and implementation of RAMs at the site are not recommended since these methods / techniques would be considered disproportionate to the predicted level of impact.