

28th April 2026

Our Ref: 2025-049

Great Crested Newt Assessment – Highway Barn, Highway, Hilmarton, Calne, SN11 8SR

Background

An application is to be made to Wiltshire Council for Prior Approval of Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Building to a single Dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) and for Associated Operational Development (Class Q a & b) at Highway Barn, Highway, Hilmarton, Calne, SN11 8SR.

The purpose of this document is to provide an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on great crested newts, and details of Reasonable Avoidance Measures which will be implemented to ensure that great crested newts are not harmed during works.

The site comprises an agricultural building, hardstanding to the east and south of the building, and approximately 71 m² of trees, shrubs, and grass adjacent to the western elevation of the building.

The proposed development would result in the removal of the area of trees, shrubs, and grass adjacent to the western elevation of the building, which provides suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians.

This assessment has been produced by Robert Dunn, a senior ecologist at Smart Ecology.

Risk Assessment

Consultation with Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC) has identified the presence of two waterbodies within 500 m of the site; one pond located approximately 45 m to the east of the site and one pond located approximately 180 m to the north of the site.

A Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment (RRA) was undertaken (see Figure 1), which is an assessment of the likelihood that the proposed development would result in an offence being committed with respect to great crested newts. This RRA assumes that great crested newts are present in both waterbodies identified within 500 m of the site and that approximately 71 m² of habitat adjacent to the western elevation of the building (i.e. less than 0.01 ha) of suitable habitat would be lost due to the proposed development. It is also assumed that precautionary methods of working would be implemented during site clearance and works to avoid impacts on individual great crested newts.

This RRA indicates that it is highly unlikely that the proposed development would result in an offence being committed with respect to great crested newts.

Component	Likely effect	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100 m of any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.05
Land 100 - 250 m from any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Land >250 m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.05
Rapid Risk Assessment result:		GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY

Figure 1: Rapid Risk Assessment (Natural England, 2020)

Proposed Reasonable Avoidance Measures

To minimise the risk of injuring or killing great crested newts during site clearance and construction the following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) will be implemented. These RAMs will also protect common amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals during works.

Site Induction

Before clearance works begin, an ecologist will meet contractors and provide a site induction. This talk will provide information on great crested newts, including their legal protection, identification, where they could be found on the site, what to do if great crested newts are found during works, and an explanation of these RAMs and the importance of adhering to them.

An identification guide for great crested newts is provided at the end of these RAMs and this will be printed out and displayed for all contractors to see.

Site Clearance

A fingertip search of the area of vegetation located adjacent to the western elevation of the building will be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist who holds a Natural England great crested newt survey licence immediately before clearance works start to check for the presence of great crested newts. Works will only proceed once great crested newts are confirmed to be absent from the work area.

The clearance of vegetation located adjacent to the building will then be supervised by the ecologist.

Any common amphibians, reptiles and small mammals found during site clearance and works will be carefully moved outside of the works area using gloved hands or a suitable container.

Construction Period

If a great crested newt is found at any time during works when the ecologist is not present then work will stop immediately and the ecologist will be contacted for advice.

Building material will be stored on pallets or hardstanding to deter great crested newts (and other animals, including reptiles and small mammals) from sheltering underneath. All waste will be stored in skips or containers and not in piles on the ground.

All excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp installed with an angle no steeper than 40 degrees, to enable animals to escape. Any pipework will be capped overnight. Excavations will be checked every morning to ensure there are no trapped animals present; if a great crested newt is found then work will stop immediately and the ecologist will be contacted for advice.

Newt Identification Guide (source: [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust](#))

Smooth newt

Grows to about 10 cm. Both sexes have orange or yellow belly stripe, with rounded black spots. Male has undulating crest running from head to tail tip.



Female

Male



Juvenile

A widespread species which breeds in a variety of water bodies. Often found in garden ponds.

After the 'tadpole' stage, young newts live on land. Most likely to be found from late summer to autumn as they disperse from ponds.

Palmate newt

Grows to 9 cm. Breeding male has ridge running along back, rather than a crest. Dark, webbed hind feet, and tail ends in filament.

Breeding male



Male terrestrial phase



Female looks similar to smooth newt.

There are two pale coloured nodules on the underside of the hind feet of female palmate newts.



Palmate



Smooth

Throat of palmate newt has no pigment (looks pink). Throat of smooth newt is off-white and usually spotted.

Great crested newt

Grows to 16 cm, but usually smaller. Crest in male has break at base of tail. Silvery-white stripe towards rear of tail conspicuous.

Both sexes have rough, granular skins and yellow/orange bellies with irregular black spots.



Male

Juveniles look like smaller versions of the female and may live on land or in the water.



Female

Strictly protected species, requiring a licence to handle or disturb.

References

Natural England (2020). *Method Statement for Great Crested Newt Mitigation.* Available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e97185bd3bf7f412654a471/gcn-method-statement.xlsm> (Accessed April 2026).

