

Case Ref: 21/01630/OUT

Date: 17/06/2021

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From: Emma Lawson – Newt Officer, NatureSpace Partnership

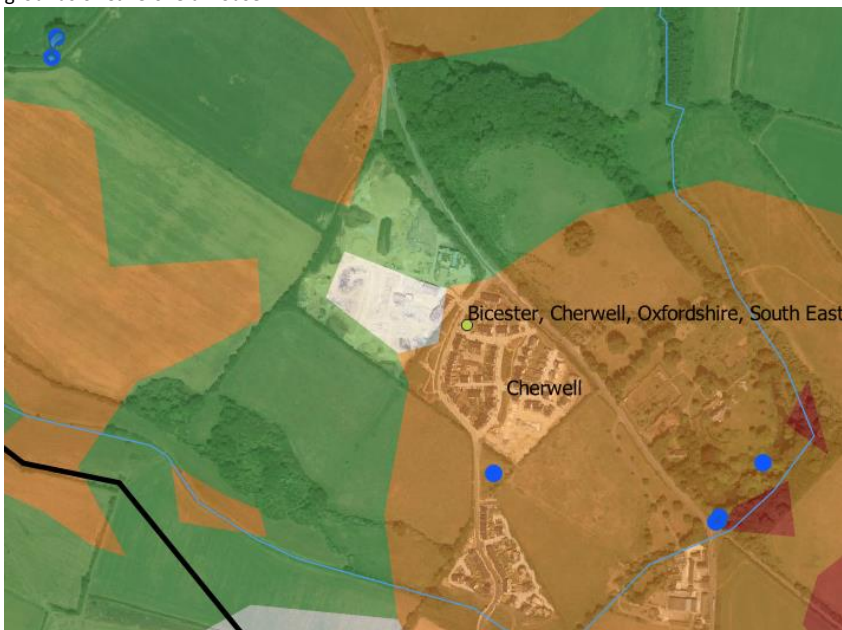
Response: **Further information required**

Comments:

This Outline planning application is for residential development (within Use Class C3), open space provision, access, drainage and all associated works and operations including but not limited to demolition, earthworks, and engineering operations, with the details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. The site is located at Land at north west Bicester, Home Farm, Lower Farm and SGR2 Caversfield.

- The development falls within the amber Impact Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts (GCN). 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 suitable habitat and great crested newts are likely to be present.
- There are six ponds within the site boundary and within 500m. There is a pond on site within woodland to the south-west boundary, a pond situated within 10m of the two parcels of land, two ponds adjacent to the north west boundary approximately 350m away, and two ponds adjacent to the east boundary within 50m of the development proposal.

The site is approximately 22ha in size, includes grassland fields and arable land, intersected and bounded by hedgerows. There are also a number of areas of scrub and woodland on site, with a notable wooded area adjacent to the north east and a small wooded area to the east within the grounds of Caversfield House.



- An Environmental Statement has been submitted in support of the application. However, the Environmental Statement only considered two ponds, only investigating a single pond, and failed to

take into account all ponds within 500m of the site boundary, notably, the two ponds located to the north-west of the site boundary, and the two ponds to the east of the site boundary within the grounds of Caversfield House.

- Aerial imagery shows a large pond, and a subsequent smaller one adjacent to it, situated less than 50m from the East boundary of the site at Caversfield House, which has not been included in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and subsequent investigations in relation to GCN presence such as HSI of the pond and eDNA. Previous comments on neighbouring planning applications (see 13/01056/OUT, Public Comments, 12/08/2013, Kleinman D 9.8.13) raised GCN as a consideration there too. These ponds are also shown on the submitted Location plan, Drawing 001, dated 14/04/2021.

Summary:

GCN are present in the local landscape, as indicated by existing records and the Impact Risk Zone mapping for the area. Clusters of breeding and non-breeding ponds are important features for maintaining a population of GCN (providing opportunities for adult newts to breed as well as foraging and sheltering habitat for juvenile and non-breeding adults); therefore a single negative eDNA result from only one of the ponds is not sufficient to rule out the potential for impacts on GCN arising through this development.

Because there is a District Licensing Scheme in operation in this area, the developer has two options – either:

- Provide an updated ecological assessment of the site and surrounding landscape to further assess the likely presence/absence of GCN; or
- Submit a NatureSpace Report/Certificate to confirm the proposed development is capable of being covered by the Council's District Licence and the applicant has entered the District Licensing Scheme.

Natural England's guidance to LPAs (Great Crested Newts: District Level Licensing for development projects, Natural England, March 2021) explains that in the red/amber impact risk zone, if the developer has not provided a NatureSpace Report/Certificate, the applicant must provide further information to either rule out impacts to GCN, or present further work (including surveys) to assess those impacts and present measures to address those impacts, with appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures. This is to demonstrate to the planning authority that the proposed measures are capable of being granted a licence.

If the developer chooses to carry out further survey work, the following should be noted:

- The development site contains favourable habitat and considering the size of the site and the potential impact on the population's range and connectivity of the landscape, all ponds on-site and within 500m (not 250m) should be considered for survey and assessment (following guidance set out within Natural England's Method Statement template – contrary to the assertion in the submitted Preliminary baseline ecological appraisal, chapter 2.3.18: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI)).
- No supporting documentation was submitted with the application in relation to the one pond that was subject to an eDNA survey. This data should be submitted along with any updated ecological assessment for this application.

For further information regarding the District Licensing approach, or to apply, please contact NatureSpace Partnership at:

Email: info@naturespaceuk.com

Phone: 01856 688307

Website: <https://naturespaceuk.com/contact-us/>

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