

Stable Cottage Pond 1
Wildscapes Planning Application Reference
Moor End, Moor End Lane, Silkstone, Barnsley, S75 4RW

Planning Statement

Overview

The great crested newt is a species protected under law and is recognised in the UK as an “at risk” species, in part due to the loss of habitat through the impact through disruption and development caused by humans on the environment. In response to this, Natural England have established a programme of District Level Licensing in order to offer an avenue of mitigation for developers to meet their responsibility to contribute to the preservation of this species where projects and developments that they are delivering will be impacting on or resulting in a loss of habitat for the great crested newt. This scheme is part of a range of measures being set out by Natural England as part of DEFRA’s policy of promoting Biodiversity Net Gain.

Wildscapes CIC have been commissioned by Natural England, under the District Level Licensing scheme, to deliver a set of ponds in South Yorkshire designed to mitigate the loss of habitat for great crested newts, and at risk species, and foster an increase in their local population.

Objective

Following discussions with the landowners at Stable Cottage, Wildscapes CIC have identified as suitable and agreed a site to hold one of the ponds that we have been commissioned to build under the District Level Licensing scheme. The site has been identified as being within a Strategic Opportunity Area for this scheme and close enough to existing populations of great crested newts that the creation of appropriate ponds will offer them a significant opportunity for colonisation and a high probability of population increase.

Local Context

The site being proposed for development sits on the border area of agricultural land which provides a range of habitat options for wildlife. The broader area around the site is predominantly agricultural interspersed with land drains with adjacent residential neighbourhoods. The region in which the site sits is typified as rural agricultural land adjacent to broadleaved woodland.

Evidence of current and previously existing pond structures can be seen in the surrounding area, including those which have been lost to agricultural development. Creation of ponds on this site will return these features to the landscape and enhance the local wildlife and biodiversity. As a local feature this is well within keeping with the existing landscape as well as offering a significant opportunity for enhancement.

Local Need

Planning applications for developments that have been approved by South Yorkshire’s Councils have been identified by Natural England, through the ecological survey portion of the planning process, as resulting in impacted or lost habitat for

great crested newts. Under the GCN District Level Licensing Framework, with which the South Yorkshire Councils have engaged as local planning authorities, the developers for these applications have applied to join this scheme. As a result, a number of ponds suitable for the habitation and increasing population of great crested newts must now be created or restored within South Yorkshire.

As the commissioned delivery body for this scheme, Wildscapes CIC has solicited interest from landowners within South Yorkshire to house ponds. Of those landowners that have expressed an interest, Wildscapes CIC has identified this site as one which meets the standards and criteria set out by Natural England as ideal for the creation of habitat for and enhancement of the population of great crested newts. Therefore this development meets an identified local need.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework carries a presumption in favour of sustainable development, including environmental sustainability with the protection and enhancement of the natural environment a key strategic strand of the policy. This application bears direct relevance to Component 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment with particular reference to:

- Item 174, section d - *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*
- Item 179, section b - *promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

In both of these elements, this application meets those requirements by creating carefully constructed and appropriate habitat for an “at risk” species as well as potential habitat for other species.

Also, where considering Item 180, section a, fulfilling the commitments under the District Level Licensing scheme support the local planning authority and relevant developers in providing adequate mitigation to significant harm to biodiversity. South Yorkshire’s Councils having already worked with the developers in reaching commitments through District Level Licensing, this proposed development is part of the agreed delivery mechanism by which it will be achieved.

Further, this development assists South Yorkshire’s Councils to better achieve their objective under Component 5 to ensure a sufficient supply of homes by providing mitigation to the harm and loss of biodiversity and habitats where prevention of loss and harm would be an obstacle to that supply.

We also note that Item 120 recognises supporting wildlife as an appropriate land function.

Yorkshire & Humber Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy

This application supports the delivery of the Yorkshire and Humber – Regional Spatial Strategy in the following ways.

Policy ENV8: Biodiversity commits the region to safeguarding, restoring and enhancing biodiversity and habitats. Where applications for residential and commercial developments approved by South Yorkshire’s Councils are resulting in the loss of habitat of great crested newts, the District Level Licensing scheme is the mechanism by which those habitats will be restored to the area and provide the pathways for the enhancement of the newt population. This application is a part of the delivery of that scheme.