

10th August 2026

To **Ben Kirk**
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**GREAT CRESTED NEWT RISK ASSESSMENT MEMO REPORT: FOREST BARN, FOREST LANE,
CASTLE GORING, WORTHING, BN13 3FD, NGR: TQ 10729 05321.**

- 1.1 This memo has been prepared by Sylvatica Ecology Ltd on behalf of Manorwood Ltd to assess the risk posed to great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* by the proposed structural renovation, dormer and extension works at Forest Barn, Forest Lane, Castle Goring, Worthing, BN13 3FD (NGR TQ 10729 05321), with particular regard to a drainage ditch bordering the eastern site boundary and its asserted potential to provide commuting and foraging habitat for the species. It sets out the legal status of great crested newt, describes the site and habitat conditions recorded during a site visit on 6th August 2026, assesses the suitability of the ditch and surrounding pond network to support the species, and sets out a precautionary method of working to be adopted during construction.

Legal Status of Great Crested Newt

- 1.2 The potential presence of great crested newt has to be considered as the species is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), and under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations'), under which great crested newt is listed as a European Protected Species (EPS). Under the Habitats Regulations it is an offence if,
- *a person deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species,*
 - *deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species,*
 - *damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.*

1.3 Disturbance of animals includes, in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to,

- *survive, breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young,*
- *in the case of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate, or*
- *to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.*

1.4 A 'breeding site' in respect of great crested newt is generally interpreted as the aquatic breeding pond and immediately associated habitat used for egg-laying and larval development, while 'resting places' include terrestrial hibernacula and refugia used outside of the breeding season.

Site and Habitat Description

1.5 Forest Barn is an old rural building of flint rubble and brick construction currently undergoing structural renovation associated with the proposed dormer and extension works, as described in Sylvatica Ecology's bat roost potential memo report of 30th June 2026. The site is bounded to the east by a drainage ditch, beyond which lies further scrub, secondary woodland edge and residential development.

1.6 The ditch in question is a steep-sided, artificially re-profiled channel running parallel to the eastern site boundary. At the time photographs were taken (6th August 2026) the ditch bed comprised loose gravel, flint and rubble with no areas of open, static water of any meaningful depth or extent.

1.7 The ditch corridor is heavily shaded along the majority of its length by dense scrub and secondary woodland comprising hazel (*Corylus avellana*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), and young ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and birch (*Betula sp.*). No submerged or floating aquatic macrophytes were recorded, and marginal emergent vegetation suitable for great crested newt egg-laying was absent or extremely limited.

1.8 GIS mapping of the surrounding landscape identifies five waterbodies (Ponds 1–5) within approximately 50–100m of the site (**Figure 1**). Pond 1 lies closest, approximately 50–70m south-west of the site; Ponds 2 and 3 lie within the grass field to the west, approximately 60–65m away; Pond 5 lies approximately 45–50m to the east, close to the ditch as it continues downstream towards Gladiolus Grove; and Pond 4, an engineered attenuation/balancing pond associated with the adjacent housing development, lies approximately 95–100m to the north. This confirms that the site sits within a landscape capable of supporting great crested newt, and that the ditch has the potential, in principle, to provide a landscape-scale link between some of these waterbodies.

1.9 **Figure 1: Pond network surrounding Forest Barn.**



Assessment of Suitability for Great Crested Newt

- 1.11 Great crested newt require still, unshaded or lightly shaded, mesotrophic waterbodies with good cover of submerged and marginal vegetation and an absence of fish for successful breeding, as set out in the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) framework (Oldham *et al.* 2000). Outside the breeding season the species relies on rough grassland, scrub, woodland edge within the surrounding terrestrial habitat, typically considered within 500m of a breeding pond, for foraging, sheltering and hibernation, moving between such habitat and breeding ponds along damp linear features such as hedgerows, ditches and rank vegetation.
- 1.12 The ditch identified at the site does not meet the physical characteristics required to support great crested newt breeding: it is a constructed, fast-draining drainage feature rather than a still waterbody, holds no meaningful area of standing water, has a coarse gravel/rubble substrate rather than a silt or clay base, and is heavily shaded along the majority of its length. None of the five mapped ponds lie within, or are directly formed by, the ditch itself, and the ditch is not considered to function as a great crested newt breeding site in its own right.
- 1.13 With regard to its function as a terrestrial commuting or foraging corridor, it is acknowledged that the presence of multiple ponds within 50–100m (Figure 1), including Pond 5 close to the eastern extent of the ditch and Pond 1 close to the site itself, means the ditch corridor could, in principle, be used by *great crested*

newt moving between breeding ponds and surrounding terrestrial habitat at a landscape scale. However, the specific reach of the ditch bordering the application site is considered to be of low functional value for this purpose at present. On this basis, while the wider ditch and pond network may hold landscape-scale value for *great crested* newt, the section directly adjoining the site is not considered to represent a significant commuting or foraging resource in its current condition.

- 1.14 On this basis, it is considered that the assertion that the ditch, at the point it borders the application site, offers significant potential commuting and foraging habitat for *great crested* newt is not supported in its current condition. The specific works proposed are assessed further below.

Assessment of the Proposed Works

- 1.15 The specific works proposed at Forest Barn have been reviewed against the site and habitat conditions described above. In relation to the ditch corridor, it is confirmed that:

- *The proposed extension does not enter the ditch buffer;*
- *Excavation associated with the works will remain at least 3m from the ditch;*
- *No vegetation will be removed as part of the works;*
- *No construction traffic will enter the ditch buffer;*
- *No drainage works will alter the ditch; and*
- *The finished development will not change the terrestrial habitat bordering the ditch.*

- 1.16 On this basis, even if occasional use of the ditch by *great crested* newt cannot be completely excluded, the particular works proposed will not materially affect a breeding site, resting place, terrestrial population or functional movement corridor, and the proposed precautionary Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) reduce the residual risk to negligible.

Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAM)

- 1.17 Notwithstanding the conclusions above, and given the proximity of the mapped pond network, it is recommended that the following precautionary method of working is adopted for any construction activity within or adjacent to the ditch corridor, in keeping with the mitigation hierarchy, to further reduce the residual risk of harm to any amphibians, including *great crested* newt, that may occasionally be present:
- *All site operatives are to receive a toolbox talk covering the legal protection afforded to great crested newt and other amphibians, and how to recognise them, prior to any groundworks commencing within or adjacent to the ditch corridor.*

- *A physical exclusion barrier (e.g. temporary stock/pedestrian fencing) is to be erected along the line of the defined ecological buffer prior to the commencement of any groundworks, and retained and maintained for the duration of construction.*
- *No excavation, soil storage, plant storage or construction access is permitted within the defined ecological buffer.*
- *A vegetated buffer is to be retained along the ditch wherever practicable, with no storage of materials, fuel, plant or spoil within this buffer.*
- *Any vegetation clearance required within or immediately adjacent to the ditch corridor is to be undertaken by hand, cut to within 100mm of ground level in a phased manner, and checked immediately beforehand by a suitably experienced person.*
- *Excavated spoil arising from works near the ditch is to be stored away from the watercourse and visually checked for amphibians before reuse or removal from site.*
- *No silt, cement washout, fuel, oil or other contaminants are to be discharged into the ditch; fuels and oils are to be stored in bunded containers away from the watercourse.*
- *Existing hydrological connectivity and flow within the ditch is to be maintained and not obstructed, diverted or dammed by works.*
- *Should any amphibian be encountered during works, all activity in that location is to stop immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist contacted for advice before works recommence.*
- *This method of working is to be retained on site and made available to all operatives and to the Local Planning Authority on request.*

Conclusion

1.18 On the basis of the habitat conditions recorded, the section of ditch adjoining Forest Barn is considered unlikely to represent a significant terrestrial commuting or foraging resource for *great crested* newt. Occasional incidental use by amphibians cannot, however, be entirely excluded given the proximity of the wider pond network, and the precautionary method of working set out at paragraph 1.17 will therefore be implemented to avoid injury or disturbance during construction. Whilst there are ponds close to the development site, the particular development at Forest Barn does not affect those ponds or the functional terrestrial habitat connecting them to the development footprint. As set out at paragraphs 1.15–1.16, the specific works proposed will not materially affect a breeding site, resting place, terrestrial population or functional movement corridor for great crested newt, and the proposed RAMs will ensure that any residual risk of incidental harm is avoided.

Signed



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References

Oldham, R.S., Keeble, J., Swan, M.J.S. and Jeffcote, M. (2000) *Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the great crested newt (Triturus cristatus)*. *Herpetological Journal*, 10, 143–155.

Natural England (2015) *District Level Licensing for great crested newts – guidance*.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

APPENDIX A: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Plate 1: Rear elevation of Forest Barn under renovation, showing scaffolding, re-tiled roof and demolition arisings with excavator.



Plate 2: Site frontage and driveway, showing scaffolding, stored materials and site access.



Plate 3: Scaffolding to the rear elevation directly abutting the temporary security fencing along the ditch corridor.



Plate 4: Temporary security fencing running along the site boundary, separating the working area from the ditch and adjacent scrub.



Plate 5: Drainage ditch adjoining the northern site boundary, with a small pocket of standing water and marginal iris.



Plate 6: Ditch corridor showing dense bramble, hazel and young tree scrub providing heavy shade over the channel.



Plate 7: Ditch bed showing gravel and flint substrate with leaf litter and debris, indicative of fast-draining conditions.



Plate 8: Ditch channel with a pocket of standing water within a heavily shaded, disturbed section; neighbouring properties visible beyond.



Plate 9: Ditch corridor continuing downstream towards neighbouring residential properties, with demolition arisings visible beyond the fence.



Plate 10: Ditch corridor heavily shaded by scrub and secondary woodland immediately adjoining the site boundary fence.

