



The Lodge, Bearwood Road

Non-Licensed Method Statement (NLMS) for Great Crested Newts

For Artel31

16th May 2026

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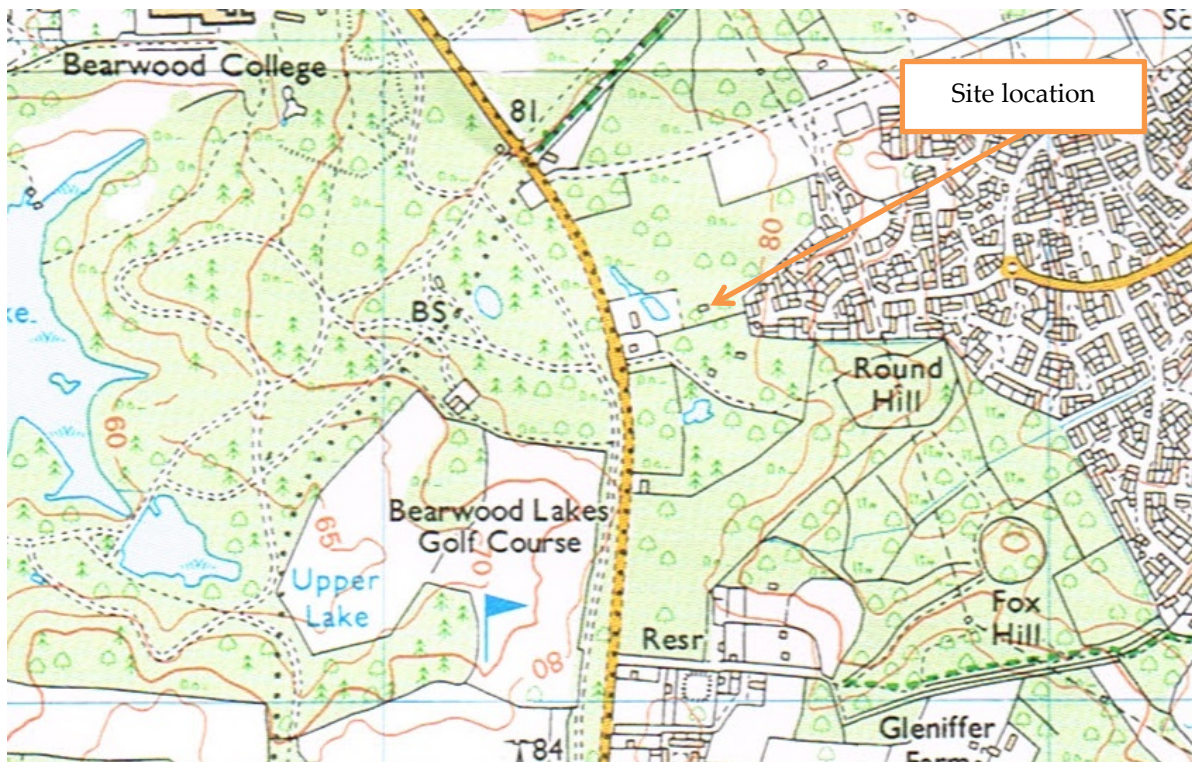


1. Introduction

1.1 Commission

Ellendale Environmental Limited was commissioned by Artel31, on behalf of their client, Ltd to provide a Non-Licensed Method Statement (NLMS) for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) to ensure all reasonable protection measures are undertaken with regards to the protection of GCN for an area of land and existing residential property at Bearwood Road, Barkham, Winnersh, in the Borough of Wokingham ('the site'). It is proposed to redevelop the site, demolish the existing building and erect a new residential property on the site ('the development').

Figure 1: Site location



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A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was undertaken for the site and surrounding areas in April 2026¹. The survey area including within the PEA and is approximately 0.3 hectares in size, comprising of an existing residential property, an area of amenity grassland and scattered trees, with access via a shared hardstanding track from the west which becomes a bare earth track to the property.

1.2 Environmental DNA

An Environmental DNA assessment of the ponds was undertaken. Environmental DNA (or eDNA) is DNA that is collected from a variety of environmental samples, such as soil and water, rather than directly sampled from an individual organism. As various organisms interact with the environment, DNA is expelled and accumulates in their surroundings. Example sources of eDNA include, but are not limited to, faeces, shed skin, carcasses and hair.

Samples taken at a site can be analysed by high-throughput DNA sequencing methods. The analysis of eDNA has great potential, not only for monitoring common species, but to genetically detect and identify other extant species that could influence conservation efforts.

The optimal period for undertaking eDNA sampling for GCN extends between 15th April and 30th June, as this is the period within which adult GCN tend to occur within waterbodies, in greatest numbers. Research (Biggs et al., 2014), however, has shown that samples collected later in the season can also provide a reliable indication of the presence of GCNs, most likely in their larval stages, as most adults will have usually left their ponds by the end of August, and often much earlier. If the test is negative, then it may reasonably be interpreted that the ponds were not used by breeding GCN that year.

¹ EEL535R260513DF The Lodge Bearwood Road Wokingham Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) CIC v1.0



1.3 Ellendale Environmental Licences

The survey was undertaken by Stewart Parsons, Director and Principal Ecologist of Ellendale Environmental, who is a full member of CIEEM and a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv). Stewart has over 20 years' professional experience of ecological surveys across the UK. Stewart holds a GCN survey licence with Natural England (CL08 Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence, 2025-83559-SCI-CL08), valid from 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2030.

The survey was assisted by Douglas Fraser, Consultant Ecologist at Ellendale Environmental, who is a full member of CIEEM. Douglas has experience of undertaking ecological surveys and has over six years' experience of environmental project management.

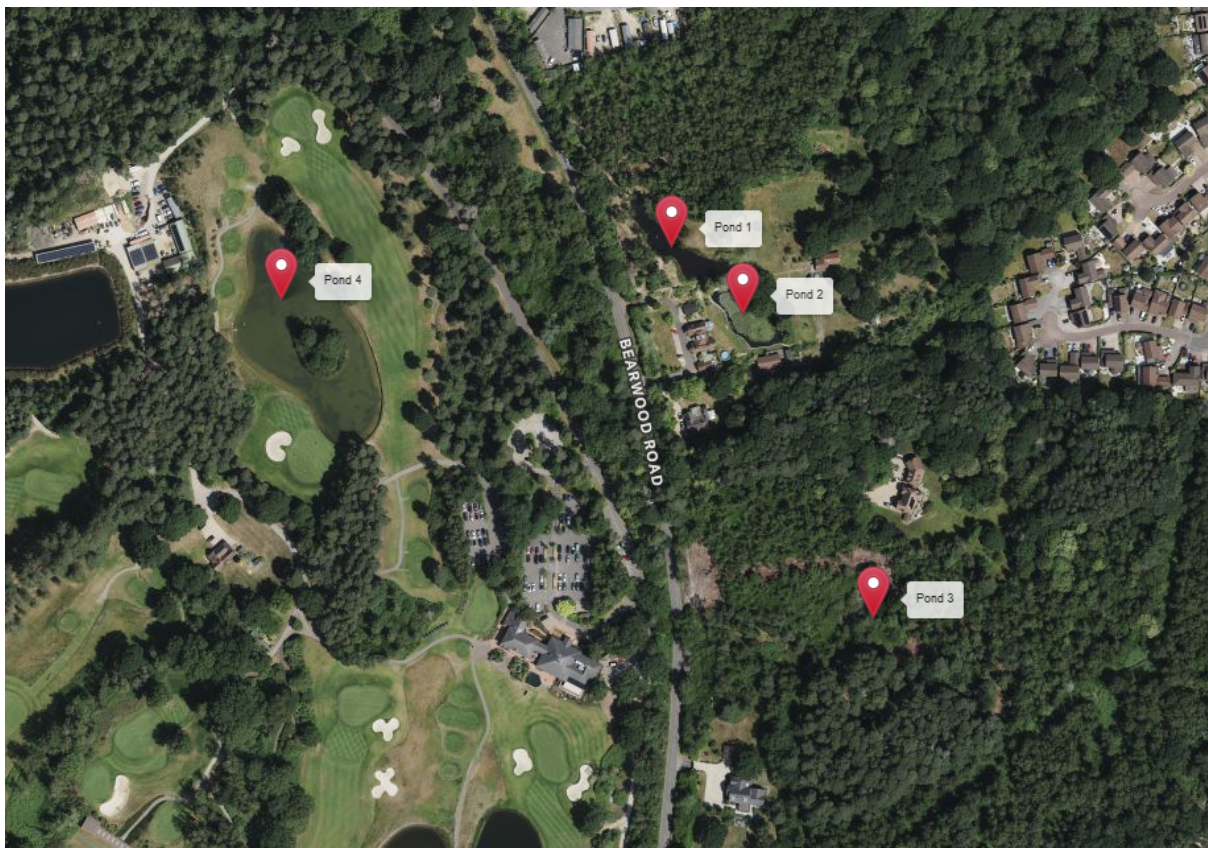


2. Results

2.1 Site Inspection

There are seven ponds within the survey area as shown via **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: showing the pond locations



'Pond 1', is located to the north-west of the site at OS Grid Reference SU 78371 68631 and is approximately 0.06ha in size. The pond is approximately 1.5m deep with steep-sided banks and at the time of the survey retained water although it is understood to be seasonally dry.

Vegetation around the pond included soft rush *Juncus effusus* which dominates the banks with a small area of common reed *Phragmites australis* and yellow iris *Iris*



pseudacorus present at the south-eastern end. Scattered foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, willow herb *Epilobium* sp., spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare* and pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* were also present. Scattered silver birch trees are also present around the pond.

Photograph 1: showing a view of Pond 1



'Pond 2' is approximately 0.085ha in size, at OS grid reference SU 78412 68594, to the south-west of the site. The banks of the pond have been previously managed with a wall and walkway present around the entire pond boundary that means it retains water throughout the year and was not dry.

Broad-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton natans* and white water lily *Nymphaea alba* are present within the pond and scattered pendulous sedge and soft rush was present



around the boundaries of the pond; however, this was limited as much of the adjacent habitat is managed as amenity grassland.

Fish were noted to be present in the pond during the survey and moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* were also noted.

Photograph 2: showing a view of Pond 2



'Pond 3' is located at OS grid reference SU 78487 68423, to the south of the site and is a relatively large pond approximately 0.6 ha on size. The pond is largely covered with common rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* which heavily shades the pond and only a small area to the north was open where the vegetation has been cleared.



Photograph 3: showing a view of Pond 3



'Pond 4' is located at OS grid reference SU 78164 68575, to the west of the site and is located within Bearwood Lakes Golf Club. The pond is managed as part of the golf club water supply for irrigation with water being pumped from the nearby Bearwood Lake under licence. The pond contains carp *Cyprinidae sp.*, which are stocked in the pond and a number of wildfowl were observed including mute swans *Cygnus olor*, Canada goose *Branta canadensis*, moorhen, coot *Fulica atra* and mallard.



Photograph 4: showing a view of Pond 4



2.2 eDNA Results

eDNA samples for GCN were taken from ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the 20th April 2026.

The eDNA analysis found evidence of GCN using the pond 1 and 2 confirming the presence of GCN in the ponds during 2026. The eDNA analysis did not find evidence of GCN using ponds 3 and 4. This negative results may reasonably be interpreted that the ponds were not used by breeding GCN in 2026. This data is presented in **Appendix A**.



2.3 Rationale for Licencing

The proposed development at the site will involve the demolition of the existing residential property which is surrounded by amenity grassland with an area of bare ground used for access. It is considered unlikely that GCN would use the habitat, to the east of ponds 1 and 2, within the proposed development footprint, as this more heavily managed and is used for residential/recreational purposes as part of the amenity area of the main property. It does not provide suitable cover for commuting or foraging, this being used much more often than the area to the west, i.e., between the pond and the railway embankments.

The Natural England Great Crested Newt Rapid Risk Assessment Tool has been completed to determine the likely level of impact arising from the proposals and to establish whether further measures are required as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Natural England Great Crested Newt Rapid Risk Assessment Tool

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.05
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m 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	

The existing ponds will be retained within the wider site and there are no impacts on this habitat from the proposed development.

Government guidance confirms that GCN regularly utilise terrestrial habitat up to 250m from breeding ponds, with the highest risks associated with impacts to breeding ponds and terrestrial habitat within 50m. Whilst the proposed development is within are within 50m of a known breeding pond it is not considered that the works will take



place in sub-optimal habitat for this species. A small area will be required for laydown and access around the proposed development during construction however this is temporary and any habitats will be returned to the original condition following completion of the works.

It is critical that, even where it is decided not to apply for a licence, that the development ensures that any works take account of potential newt dispersal. The habitat surrounding the pond, particularly to the west along the railway corridor is highly suitable for GCN and provides connective habitat to additional ponds within 250m.

This habitat and existing land use will not be impacted by the proposed development ensuring there is adequate connectivity of habitats which are retained.

It is considered unlikely that individual GCN will be encountered during the works and it is therefore assessed that a licence for the works are not required for the proposed development as an offence is considered highly unlikely during the works to replace the existing buildings.

The works will take place under a Non-Licensed Method Statement (NLMS) for GCN. The NLMS details a method of works to ensure the construction of the proposed development does not impact GCN, their breeding sites or resting places, all of which are protected by UK and European law. To ensure effective robustness, the NLMS requires that an avoidance buffer of 50m from known GCN ponds from construction works is provided, with any habitat creation works within this distance completed under the supervision of a suitably experienced and licenced GCN ecologist.

An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be available to visit the site throughout the works to undertake surveys and inspections of the site and adjacent habitats as required. The results of these surveys will be given to the project team on site immediately following the surveys/inspections. Should GCN be identified within an



area works will be halted within the area whilst mitigation is determined (under consultation with Wiltshire Council and Natural England as required).



3. Legislation and Ecology

3.1 Legislation

Five species of amphibian are widespread in England; common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus* and GCN. A sixth species of amphibian, the natterjack toad *Bufo calamita*, also occurs in England but this species has special habitat requirements that limits its range to certain sand dune and heathland sites that are not present on the site.

Amphibians require aquatic habitat within which to breed and suitable terrestrial habitat to forage and hibernate. Suitable breeding waterbodies are usually well vegetated with still, shallow water which is not heavily shaded or very exposed. Terrestrial habitat includes woodland, scrub, field edges and gardens. Hibernation can occur under stone or log piles, in crevices or leaf litter and under the soil. Occasionally amphibians may be found hibernating in their breeding pools.

Over the last few decades all amphibians have suffered a decline in numbers. This is due to a combination of many factors, which include habitat destruction and fragmentation, loss of breeding pools through unsympathetic management and neglect, introduction of fish (which eat amphibian larvae) and pollution.

The GCN is a European Protected Species (EPS) protected under the 2017 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, which implements the EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom. In relation to an EPS, the 2017 regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of an EPS;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in particular any disturbance which is likely to: (i) impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate; (ii) affect



significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal; and/or
- To (a) be in possession of, or to control; (b) to transport any live or dead animal or any part of an animal; (c) to sell or exchange or (d) offer for sale or exchange any live or dead animal or part of an animal of an EPS.

In addition, GCNs are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended). The GCN is listed on Schedule 5 of the Act and is subject to the provisions of Sections 9.4b and 9.4c, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; and/or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a GCN.

Where works are planned that may result in an offence under the current legislation then works should be carried out under an appropriate licence from Natural England.

The GCN, natterjack toad and common toad are also listed as priority species for conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.



4. Impact of Development

The approach required to avoid impacts to GCN are detailed in the following sections. It is considered that the following measures will also safeguard a range of common species that may be present on the site.

4.1 GCN Mitigation

All works are to be undertaken in habitats of negligible value for GCN, where the new property is to be developed. No high-value terrestrial habitat accessible to GCN populations will be impacted or lost during the construction phase of the Development, and strict buffers will be in place around the site margins. A precautionary approach is required to ensure individual GCN are not killed or injured during works and potential GCN habitats are not subject to disturbance.

Extensive enhancement measures will strengthen connectivity to higher value habitats out with the site, such as the woodlands, which will provide further foraging, sheltering and commuting opportunities for GCN. It is considered that the following approach will be sufficiently robust to ensure that no legal offence with respect to the killing or injury of GCN occurs.

4.2 Timing

As part of the Development works, habitat will be maintained around the boundary of the site. This work will take place during the winter months; October to March, when GCN are hibernating, and less likely to be foraging and/or commuting across negligible value habitats, such as the grassland habitats. The timing restriction further limits the potential for disturbance to GCN.

4.3 Preparatory Works

Prior to any activities being undertaken on the site, contractors will be provided with a 'contractor briefing/ tool box talk' from the supervisory ecologist/ECOW prior to commencement of works. This will discuss the requirements for the protection of



GCN and the measures that will need to be followed. Following the contractor briefing, in order to facilitate personnel, vehicular and equipment access on site, the supervisory ecologist will carefully conduct a hand search that will enable access to start works and to identify if there is any presence of GCN. A hand search of the access route into and around the site and any compound areas will be carried out, with any natural or artificial refugia found (e.g., logs, stones, rocks etc.), lifted and checked for sheltering animals before being removed from the site only if absent of GCN. Given that all works are limited to amenity grassland only, such refugia are not expected to be present but, are included here for information should any be identified between planning and works commencing.

In the very unlikely event that GCN are found, this activity will halt immediately and both the GCN and its habitats will be retained in-situ within 100 m of the searched area, with works stopping immediately (within this area) to ensure that GCN are appropriately protected. Consultation with a GCN licenced ecologist and Natural England will need to be sought, which will likely require the submission of an EPS mitigation licence application. Works will then only be allowed to continue under a licence granted from Natural England.

Vehicle and equipment access will only be allowed within designated access routes, within the compound and within the defined work areas. These areas will be clearly demarcated for the duration of the works by tape and cane or Heras fencing, with advisory signage put in place to guide contractors and ensure that they are aware of the extent of working areas. No fencing which could prevent GCN from moving across the site will be installed. Access through these areas will be approached carefully preferentially using existing tracks and access points into amenity grassland areas, with vehicle tracking kept to a minimum as much as possible.

4.4 Buffer Creation

A strict buffer of no works/personnel/material storage/activity will be created around the site boundaries. The buffer areas will be clearly demarcated for the duration of the construction phase of the development by tape and cane or similar, with advisory



signage put in place to inform contractors and ensure they are aware of the extent of working areas. These exclusion buffers will be identified to all site personnel as part of the toolbox talk induction. There will be no access within these buffers unless supervised by an ecologist.

Further buffer zones will occasionally need to be created with Heras fencing constructed around terrestrial habitat, such as retained hedgerow and woodland to protect other important ecological features and avoid adverse effects, such as Root Protection Areas (RPAs) or nesting bird habitat. Activities in these areas need to be with respect to GCN as well as other important ecological features, and the advice of a GCN licenced ecologist/ECOW should be sought to ensure that GCN are also not going to be subject to adverse effects in these areas.

4.5 Completion of Works

At the end of each day during construction, equipment will be parked / stored in pre agreed, designated areas. This will help to reduce the potential for GCN to locate sheltering opportunities (e.g., within vehicles or equipment) in the works area during the night to shelter there during the day. The use of Heras fencing or similar round the area currently subject to works, will be put in place at the end of each day to secure the works area and demarcate it. On completion of the Development, following construction and soft landscaping, the site is to be left clear of any materials, equipment and spoil heaps.



5. Mitigation Measures

5.1 Mitigation

- Site personnel are to be made aware of the potential presence of GCN through a toolbox talk (**Appendix B**);
- Site personnel will be inducted to the environmental constraints of the site;
- A suitably experienced ecologist/ECOW will be available to attend site on a regular basis throughout the works to ensure all environmental mitigation relevant to GCN is delivered;
- Any temporarily exposed pipes or similar will be capped when staff are off site to prevent mammals from gaining access and becoming trapped;
- Habitat management and manipulation should be implemented to ensure the area is unsuitable for terrestrial amphibians;
- Felled trees and shrubs should be chipped and mulched so as to not create habitat for amphibians;
- Any trenches or excavations on site should have a plank placed within them overnight at an angle of no greater than 45 degrees, to ensure that trapped animals have a means of safe egress;
- Water will be prevented from pooling on the site (i.e., in tyre ruts, etc.) through the use of drains and/or pumps as appropriate to prevent amphibians from colonising ephemeral pools;
- No materials are to be stored directly on the ground. Storage should be raised off the ground to prevent amphibians from crawling underneath for shelter. Pallets or racking should be used;
- If bulk sand and/or ballast are to be stored on site, it should be stored off the ground as specified in suitable one tonne storage bags on pallets or stored directly on the ground within areas enclosed by amphibian proof fencing. Amphibians and other animals will quickly colonise rubble/aggregate or sand piles as suitable areas for hibernation;



- An emergency procedure will be implemented by site workers if an GCN are unexpectedly encountered. All work will cease until a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist has inspected the site and determined the appropriate course of action; and
- Should GCN be identified within an area works will be halted within the area whilst mitigation is determined (under consultation with Natural England if required).

5.2 Habitat Management and Manipulation

- Vegetation within areas of suitable terrestrial habitat located within the area of works should be cleared using hand-held machinery to a height of no less than 100mm to reduce suitability of the habitat and to encourage the dispersal of any animals away from affected areas;
- Vegetation should be cut using hand-held tools (and under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist if required, who could inspect affected areas prior to and during works);
- In addition, any refuge opportunities present should be dismantled by hand and searched prior to being removed; and
- Vegetation removal works should be carried out at a time of year when amphibians are active (generally March to October inclusive), ideally during the newt breeding season (mid-March to mid-June inclusive) when newts are even less likely to be present at the site.



Appendix A – eDNA Results



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Appendix B – Toolbox Talk for GCN