

Moorhill Road, West End

REPTILE PRESENCE / LIKELY ABSENCE SURVEY REPORT

B029375

Highwood Homes Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The site is located at Moorhill Road, West End and is centred at OS National Grid Reference SU 47110 13549.
Proposals	The development proposals are for the construction of a 70-bed care home (use class C2) with access to Moorhill Road, parking, landscaping and other associated works.
Existing Site Information	Tetra Tech completed an Ecological Appraisal of the site in May 2021. Surveys were recommended given the presence of suitable terrestrial reptile habitat on site
Scope of this Survey(s)	Tetra Tech was commissioned in May 2021 to carry out seven reptile presence / likely absence surveys at the site. The surveys were carried out from 23 rd September to 11 th October. The aims of the survey work were to determine the population size class (if possible and present) of any reptile species present. This was required to inform an assessment of impacts of the development proposals on reptiles.
Results	No reptiles were found on site during the surveys. They are therefore considered to be likely absent from the site.
Recommendations	To meet the requirements for enhancing diversity as set out in the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan, it is recommended that enhancements are undertaken as per the Ecological Appraisal.

GLOSSARY

CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management
CRoW Act	Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
cSAC	Candidate Special Areas of Conversation
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EcIA	Ecological Impact Assessment
EMMP	Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan
HPI	Habitat(s) of Principal Importance
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
MCIEEM	Member of Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management
Natura 2000 site	A European site designated for its nature conservation value
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
pSPA	Special Protection Area
SPI	Species of Principal Importance
W&CA	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Tetra Tech was commissioned by Highwood Homes Ltd on May 2021 to undertake Reptile Presence / Likely Absence Surveys of the site known as Moorhill Road, West End.

This report has been prepared by Project Ecologist Ben Cooke and the conditions pertinent to it are provided in Appendix A.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located at Moorhill Road, West End in Hampshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 47110 13549. The site is shown on Figure 1 and comprises the grounds of a former residential property with areas of scrub, tall ruderal vegetation and scattered trees.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The development proposals are for the construction of a 70-bed care home (use class C2) with access to Moorhill Road, parking, landscaping and other associated works.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The aims of the survey work and the subsequent report presented herein were to:

- Determine if reptiles are present or likely absent from the site
- Estimate the population size class of reptiles if they are present
- Determine if any impacts on reptiles are likely to arise from the development; and
- Provide preliminary advice and outline strategies to avoid / mitigate / compensate for any likely impacts on reptiles, in line with planning policy and legalisation.

Note that scientific names are provided at the first mention of each species and common names (where appropriate) are then used throughout the rest of the report for ease of reading.

A summary of the key legislation is also provided in Appendix B.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 FIELD SURVEYS

2.1.1 Presence / Likely Absence Survey

The site was surveyed in accordance with the guidance outlined in the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Gent & Gibson, 2003) and Advice Sheet 10 – Reptile Survey (Froglife, 1999).

In accordance with the guidance above, 31 artificial refuges (mats comprising bitumen roofing felt and a wooden board approximately 0.5 m x 0.5 m which was already present) were placed across the site in all areas considered to have habitat suitable for reptiles (see Figure 2 for reptile mat plan). There was approximately 0.45 ha of suitable reptile habitat within the site meaning that a minimum of five mats were required. As such, the density of mats is above the minimum density of ten refugia per hectare of suitable habitat (according to Froglife guidelines). The mats were deployed on 9th August 2021 and were left undisturbed to 'bed in' on site for seven weeks prior to the commencement of surveys; to allow for reptiles on the site to find and use them.

Surveys were completed to establish the presence or likely absence of reptile species. This involved seven visits from between 23rd September and 11th October 2021 in suitable weather conditions.

During the presence /absence surveys, each mat was first checked for basking individuals from a distance before being slowly approached and hand searched for sheltering reptiles. Terrestrial habitat and natural refuges including piles of brash and compost heaps between refuges was also searched for reptiles during each survey visit. The location of any reptile sighting was recorded on site to allow for analysis of population distributions across the site.

As a guideline it is recommended that the optimal time to survey reptiles is between 08:30 to 11:00 and between 16:00 and 18:30 and when air temperature is between 9°C and 18°C. Heavy rain and strong wind are considered unsuitable (Froglife, 1999). As reptile activity is heavily dependent on weather conditions, the surveyor recorded air temperature; wind speed; precipitation and cloud cover at the beginning of the survey (see Table 1).

The reptile surveys were conducted by experienced Tetra Tech Project Ecologist Ben Cooke and Tetra Tech Field Surveyor Camille Tellier.

2.1.2 Relative Population Size Classes

Relative population size classes are determined by the peak count of adults across 20 survey visits for each species. Population size classes are categorised in accordance with the guidance provided by Froglife (1999), as per Table 1. Although only seven surveys were performed (as this is accepted as providing confirmation of reptile presence), these numbers can be used as an indication of minimum population size.

Table 1: Calculating Relative Population Size for Reptiles (Froglife, 1999)

Species	Low population	Good population	Exceptional population
Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	< 5	5 -10	> 10
Grass snake <i>Natrix helvetica</i>	< 5	5 -10	> 10
Common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	< 5	5 -20	> 20

Species	Low population	Good population	Exceptional population
Slow worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	< 5	5 -20	> 20

2.2 LIMITATIONS

To gain an accurate population size class assessment of reptiles, more than seven survey visits are required. However, it is largely accepted that seven visits provide adequate evidence of reptile presence / likely absence, providing the surveys are carried out at appropriate times of year and weather conditions. It is considered that the results from the seven survey visits give a reasonable estimate of population size.

The details of this report will remain valid for a period of two years from the date of the survey (October 2023), after which the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary (CIEEM, 2018). Note that the recommendations within this report should be reviewed (and reassessed if necessary) should there be any changes to the red line boundary or development proposals which this report was based on.

3.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

3.1 SURVEY TIMINGS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

Surveys were undertaken in suitable weather conditions as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Weather Conditions

Survey No.	Date	Time		Air Temperature (°C)	Wind Speed (Beaufort)	Cloud Cover (%)	Precipitation
		Start	End				
1	23.09.21	10:33	11:06	17	2	90	nil
2	29.09.21	10:24	11:02	14	2	80	nil
3	01.10.21	13:50	14:22	12	5	0	nil
4	04.10.21	10:50	11:40	12	1	100	Light rain shower during survey (approx. duration 5 min)
5	06.10.21	10:30	10:55	13	4	0	nil
6	08.10.21	11:45	12:20	17	1	100	nil
7	11.10.21	14:30	15:06	15	1	10	nil

3.2 FIELD SURVEY

3.2.1 Presence / Likely Absence Survey

No reptiles were recorded during the surveys.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY & LEGISLATION

4.1 REVISED NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

A revised NPPF was issued on 20th July 2021 (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2021) and currently supplements government Circular 06/2005, *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

Circular 06/2005 states that the presence of protected species is a material consideration in the planning process. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF also states that:

'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate*
- 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*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

The conservation and enhancement of wildlife is also specifically reference re: development within the National Parks or the Broads.

Paragraph 180 then goes on to confirm that:

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*

- c) *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

Regarding EclA's and HRA's – any sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on any Natura 2000/habitats site should also be given the same level as protection as the pSPA's and cSAC's themselves. In addition, when an application is being determined, Paragraph 182 clarifies that:

“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”

Paragraph 185 is also relevant as;

Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:...

- c) *limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.*

4.2 BIODIVERSITY 2020: A STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND'S WILDLIFE & ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Biodiversity 2020 (DEFRA, 2011) replaces the previous UK Biodiversity Action Plan and sets national targets to be achieved. The intent of Biodiversity 2020, however, is much broader than the protection and enhancement of less common species and is meant to embrace the wider countryside as a whole.

The priority species and habitats considered under Biodiversity 2020 are the Species of Principal Importance & Habitat Principal Importance (HPI) detailed under NERC Act (see Appendix B for further details).

4.3 LOCAL PLAN

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016 -2036 (EBC, 2018) under Paragraph for of Policy DM11, Nature Conservation states;

Impacts on priority habitats and protected and priority species will not be permitted unless the applicant can evidence that;

- *there has been thorough habitat and species surveys;*
- *there is an overall biodiversity gain; and*
- *protected species impacts have been avoided or mitigated and their needs taken into consideration within the development design;*

4.4 LEGISLATION

There are six reptile species native to the UK; these include slow worm, smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*, sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*, grass snake, adder and common lizard. All of these reptile

species are protected under the W&CA and benefit from various levels of protection. The adder, grass snake, slow-worm and common lizard receive partial protection under Section 9 of the W&CA. This legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these animals; and
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publish advertisement to buy or sell individual reptiles.

All six reptile species native to the UK are also afforded more general protection in England (and Wales) within the NERC Act. This imposes a duty on all public bodies, including local authorities and statutory bodies, in exercising their functions, to have due regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity [Section 40 (1)]. It notes that conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a population or habitat [Section 40 (3)]. Consequently, attention should be given to dealing with the modification or development of an area if aspects of it are deemed important to reptiles, such as foraging, basking and resting areas.

All UK reptile species are listed as an SPI for the Conservation of Biodiversity in England and are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act.

5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 IMPACTS

No reptiles were recorded during the survey visits completed; therefore, reptiles are considered to be likely absent from the site and no impacts will arise from the proposed development.

5.2 ENHANCEMENTS

Whilst enhancement is not a legal requirement, it is encouraged within the site as it helps to meet the government objectives for planning to protect and enhance biodiversity, minimise impacts and provide net gains for biodiversity in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Incorporating enhancement measures into the proposed development would demonstrate compliance with Policy DM11, Nature Conservation which states;

In determining planning applications, the Borough Council will:

- a. *seek opportunities to create or enhance habitats and features of nature conservation interest, having regard to local geodiversity and soils; Eastleigh Borough Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2012-2022 or updated versions*

The creation of hibernation sites (hibernacula) within the site is recommended to provide reptiles with a frost-free shelter and safe from predation. In addition, further log piles can be created throughout the site (in addition to the existing log pile within the site) using existing material within the site such as the felled tree trunk, which would require removal to facilitate the proposed development. These piles would provide extra shelter and help to attract an array of invertebrate species.

Enhancement such as the above could also be captured within an Environmental Mitigation and Management Plan (EMMP) for the site as recommended within the associated Ecological Appraisal (Tetra Tech, 2021).

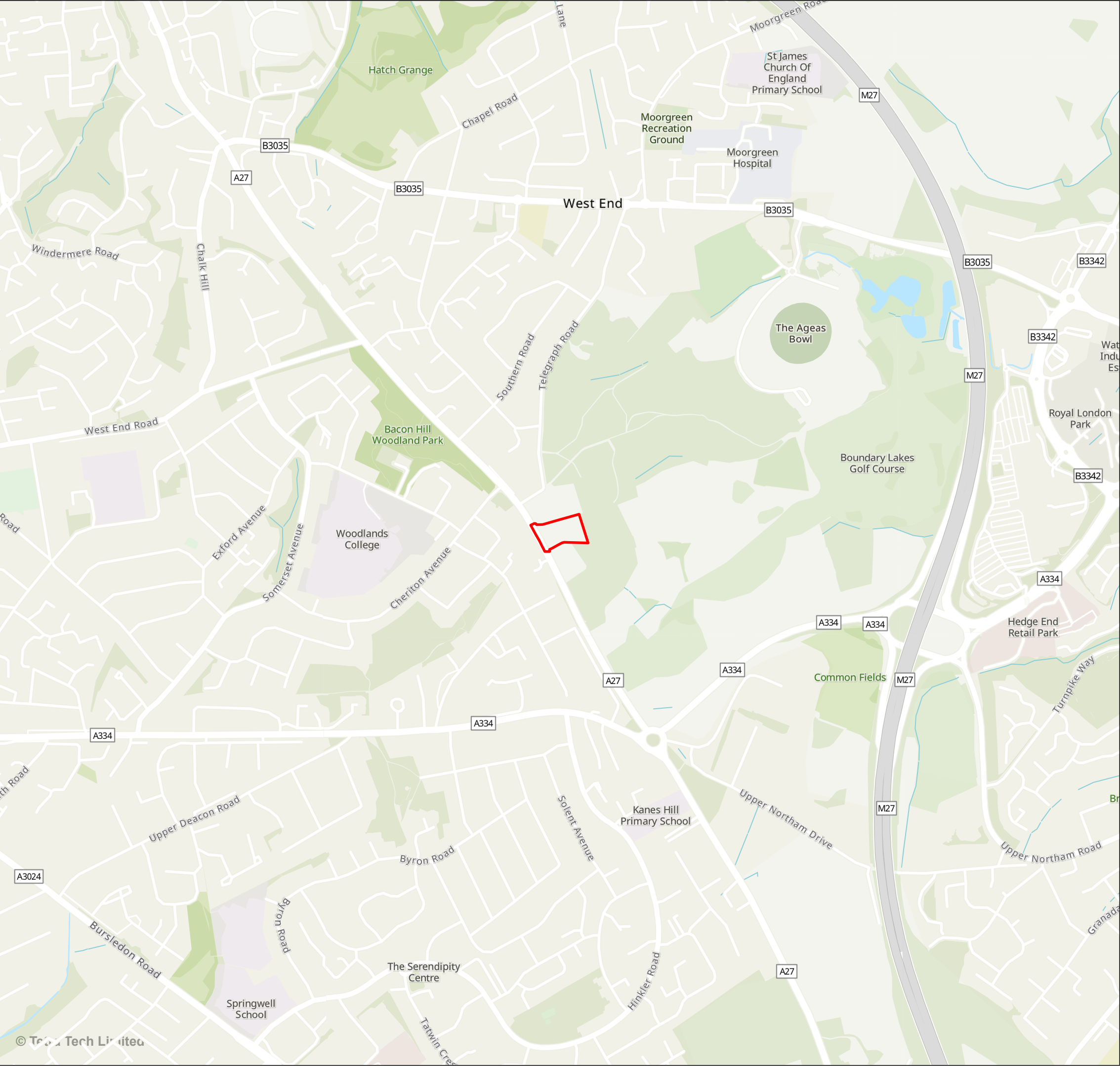
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- Tetra Tech, (2021) Moorhill Road, West End, Ecological Appraisal. Written on behalf of Highwood Homes Ltd. Project Number, 784-B029375

FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

Figure 2 – Reptile Refuge Location Plan



Site Location Plan

Moorhill, Moorhill Road, West End

Highwood Homes Ltd



Legend

Site boundary

Notes:

Drawn by: CL
Checked by: BC
Office: Southampton

Figure No. 1
Revision No. A

0150300450 Meters

Scale 1:10,000 @A3

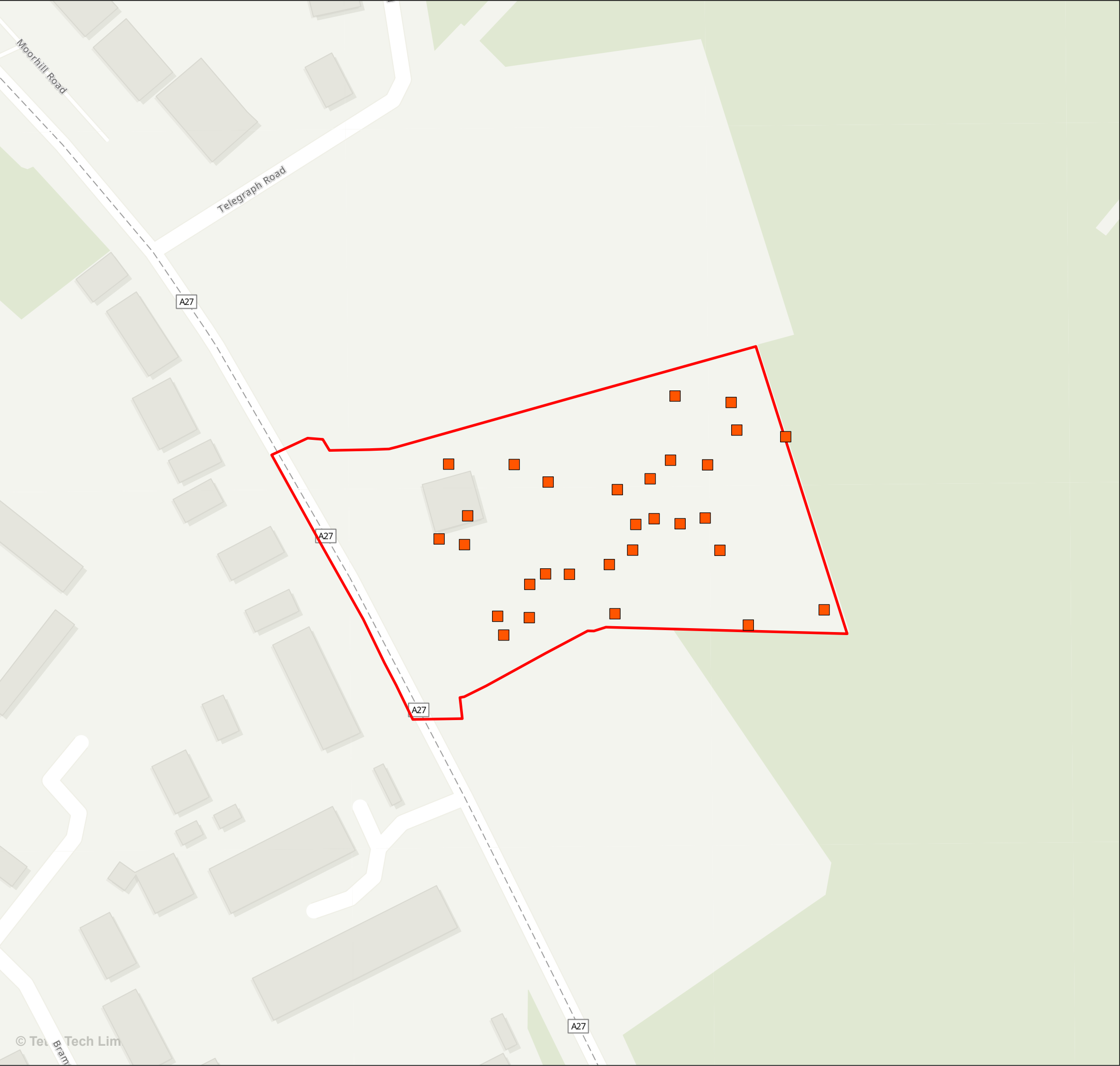
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Reptile Refuge Location Plan

Moorhill, Moorhill Road, West End

Highwood Homes Ltd



Legend

- Site boundary
- Reptile refuge

Notes:

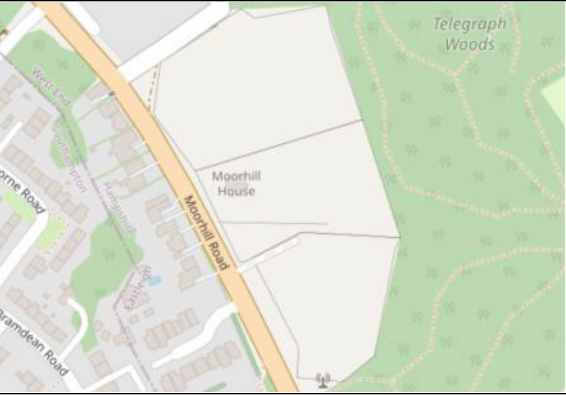
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Figure No. 2
Revision No. A

0 10 20 30 Meters
Scale 1:1,000 @A3

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