



Reptile Survey

**Land South-East of Chalcroft Business Park
West End, Hampshire**

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Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND	3
SITE CONTEXT AND STATUS.....	3
LEGISLATION	4
2.0 METHODOLOGY	5
3.0 RESULTS	5
4.0 DISCUSSION	7
<i>MITIGATION STRATEGY</i>	7
<i>ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY</i>	7
5.0 CONCLUSIONS.....	10
6.0 REFERENCES	11

LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Strutt & Parker to undertake a reptile presence/likely absence survey for land south-east of Chalcroft Business Park. This follows a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (The Ecology Partnership 2023) which identified suitable reptile habitat within the boundary features on site.
- 1.2 This report presents the results of the reptile surveys on site, which aim specifically to determine the presence or likely absence of reptiles on the site.
- 1.3 This report comprises:
- Introduction, including the legislative and planning context (Section 1);
 - Assessment methodology (Section 2);
 - Results of reptile surveys (Section 3);
 - Discussion and recommendations (Section 4);
 - Conclusions (Section 5).

Site Context and Status

- 1.4 The site (SU 48750 15962) is located south-east of Chalcroft Business Park and consists primarily of areas of grassland with some scattered trees. The wider area consists of woodland to the north and west, grassland fields to all aspects, railway tracks to the south and the town of Hedge End to the south-east.
- 1.5 The approximate red line boundary of the site and the immediate surrounding area are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary and immediate surroundings, captured from Google Earth Pro (April 2023)

Description of Proposed Development

- 1.6 Outline application for up to 4,130sqm of commercial floorspace (Use Classes E(g)(ii), (iii) and B8) to include farm shop (Use Class E(a)) of up to 327sqm, parking and yard areas (including accessible spaces), landscape buffers and acoustic mitigation. Formation of vehicular and pedestrian access to Estate road (access not a reserved matter).

Legislation

- 1.7 In the UK, there are six native reptile species. The four widespread species are adder (*Vipera berus*), grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). The two rare species are smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*).
- 1.8 The widespread reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against intentional killing and injuring and the sale of a wild reptile or any part

- of such animal. The rare reptiles also receive legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 against deliberate injury, killing, capture or disturbance of a rare reptile and damage or obstruction of any place used for shelter or protection.
- 1.9 All six reptile species are also listed as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which means local authorities have a legal duty to take their conservation into account.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 A terrestrial survey of the site for reptiles was carried out over seven survey visits in August and September 2023. Prior to the commencement of the survey, the site was set up with artificial refugia (roofing felt) for reptiles on 16th March 2023, with a total of approximately 80 mats placed along the boundary of suitable edge habitat on site.
- 2.2 Reptile mats were placed within areas of suitable habitat, including the site margins and in areas of tall ruderal vegetation, tussock-forming grassland, and damp areas across the site (Figure 2). The mats were left in place for a bedding-in period of just over two weeks prior to the commencement of the reptile survey, exceeding the required period as per standing advice from Natural England.
- 2.3 The timing and number of surveys completed were based on guidelines produced by Froglife (1999) and Gent and Gibson (1998). A total of seven survey visits were carried out to check the refugia for the presence of reptiles. Visits were only carried out if the weather conditions were suitable for locating reptiles. Visits were carried out at a variety of times during the day to take any potential diurnal variation in activity into account. On each visit to the site, a minimum of one circuit to check all refugia was carried out.

3.0 Results

- 3.1 The site was surveyed for reptiles between April and September 2023. Table 1 below documents the timing and weather conditions of the reptile survey visits, along with any reptiles identified on site during the survey.

Table 1: Reptile survey results (2023)

Visit no.	Date	Average temperature	Weather	Reptile Numbers (adults)	
				Slow worm Adult male	Slow worm Adult female
Refugia set-up	16 th March 2023	11°C	Clear gentle breeze	-	-
1	3 rd April	16°C	Clear gentle breeze	1	0
2	20 th April	17°C	Clear gentle breeze	1	0
3	31 st May	18°C	Light cloud gentle breeze	1	2
4	29 th June	18°C	Clear gentle breeze	0	0
5	26 th July	18°C	Clear, calm	2	2
6	16 th Aug	18°C	Clear, calm	0	3
7	14 th Sep	18°C	Clear gentle breeze	0	0

3.2 The peak count of adult reptiles was on the 26th July when four slow worm were recorded. Under the widely used Froglife (1999) scoring system, the site supports a 'low' population of slow worm.

3.3 The locations of these are identified in Figure 2 below.

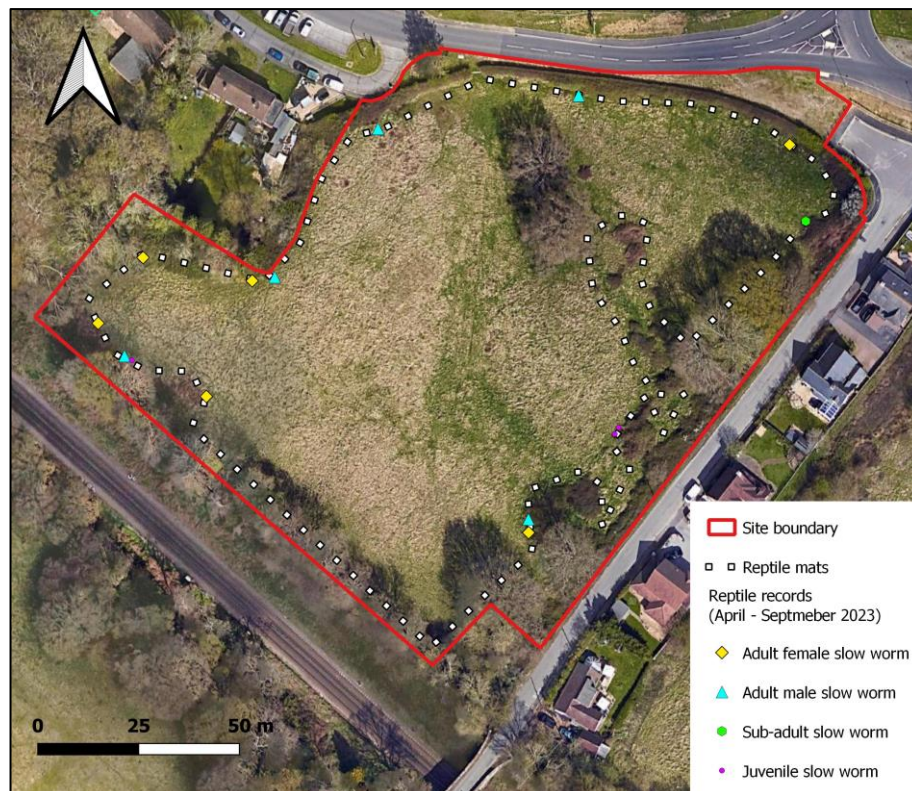
**Figure 2: Location of reptiles recorded on site in 2023**

Table 2: Population class assessment categories (Froglife 1999) and their application at the site

Species	Population class		
	Low	Good	Exceptional
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 Based on the survey findings and the scoring criteria detailed in Froglife (1999), the site has been identified as supporting a 'low' population of slow worm. Recorded individuals were mostly evenly distributed along the transect area.
- 4.2 The four widespread species of reptile are legally protected via part of Section 9(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against "*intentional killing and injuring*". Natural England's standing advice where widespread reptiles be effected by a development (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reptiles-protection-surveys-and-licences>) is that a mitigation plan will need to be produced to meet legislation. This is usually delivered through a condition on any approved development.

Mitigation Strategy

- 4.3 It is recommended that a mitigation strategy be developed to ensure that individuals are not harmed by the redevelopment of the site. This may form part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity), or a standalone report, conditioned as part of the outline planning permission if approved. The following is considered an outline mitigation strategy only.
- 4.4 For a low reptile population, a precautionary method of habitat clearance is usually sufficient to mitigate any impact on reptiles. However, this is only effective where the reptiles are located in a relatively small area of habitat alongside an area being retained in which they can be displaced into. As the suitable reptile habitat (albeit suboptimal) is present across the majority of the site, and the reptiles are spread out over this area, this method is not considered appropriate, as slow worms are slow moving and cannot be displaced over long distances. As such, a translocation is recommended.

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- 4.5 Given that the site supports only a very low population of reptiles, an offsite reptile translocation it not considered necessary, as the more optimal habitat within the edge of the site could be retained and enhanced as a receptor area. This receptor area should comprise at least 0.5ha of suitable retained grassland.
- 4.6 It is recommended that reptile exclusion fencing is constructed along the boundaries of the works area. This will require sensitive clearance under ecological watching brief along the route of the fence line.
- 4.7 Refugia would be set up within the fenced off area, at least two weeks prior to the trapping period in order to bed in. Guidance from HGBI (1998) recommends a minimum trapping period of 60 days for a population of slow worm of <50 adults per hectare. As the population on this site was a maximum of 4 adults over 1.8ha (2.2 slow worms/ha), it would be reasonable and proportionate to reduce this to a minimum trapping period to 30 days with an additional 5 clear days triggering the end of the trapping period. Any reptiles caught during the trapping period would be translocated into the reptile receptor area. The translocation should take place within the active season for reptiles between late March/early April and late September/early October (weather dependant).
- 4.8 The receptor area should be made suitable for reptiles prior to the start of the translocation. Hibernaculum should be created, excessive bramble and large shrubs cut back, and the grasses within allowed to grow up to provide suitable cover from predators.
- 4.9 Once trapping is complete, the trapping area should be sensitively cleared and subject to a destructive search. The following methods of sensitive clearance are considered to be the most effective method;
- Vegetation on site should be cut to 100mm.
 - Any log/brash/soil piles are to be removed sensitively and by hand, not using any heavy machinery. This is especially important if works must be carried out during the winter, when reptiles (and other animals) are likely to be hibernating within such structures.
 - Under ecological watching brief, an excavator with a toothed bucket should carefully strip back the topsoil. If this reveals any reptiles, the ecologist should indicate the

excavator to stop and when safe to do so should safely move the reptile out of the works area and into the receptor area.

- Following the above, parts of the reptile fencing can be removed to facilitate access however, that along the boundary of the receptor area should remain in situ throughout the works. During construction, the site is to be kept free of piles of debris such as log piles, leaf piles, brick heaps or loose soil, and vegetation kept short (other than trees/shrubs).

Enhancement Strategy

- 4.10 The site can be enhanced for a range of wildlife, including reptiles, as part of the design and include features which are favoured by reptile species.
- 4.11 Enhanced ecological corridors along the site margins are recommended to support green infrastructural. The use of wildflower seed mixes to increase the biodiversity of areas of species poor grassland habitats will enhance the ecological value of the site for a range of important invertebrates. Grassland on the margins of the site should be left unmanaged to provide areas of suitable habitat for reptiles and amphibians, as well as invertebrates.
- 4.12 Habitat piles should be installed within greenspaces for use as refugia by reptiles. These could be log or stone piles (see Figure 4 below) and should be located in a variety of conditions, including under shrubs, and along site boundaries. Planting around habitat piles with such species as honeysuckle can also add value.



Figure 4: Examples of log piles that can be located at the edges of the site

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 A presence/likely absence survey for reptiles was undertaken within areas of suitable habitat on site between April and September 2023, with low numbers of slow worm identified on site.
- 5.2 The development will result in the loss of the majority of suboptimal open grassland reptile habitat on site, whilst retaining and enhancing the more suitable scrub/woodland edge habitats .
- 5.3 An outline mitigation strategy has been devised for the site, including exclusion fencing, reptile translocation, and sensitive clearance methods, during the active season for reptiles, between April and September. However, it is recommended that final mitigation measures are detailed in a separate CEMP or standalone document once proposals are finalised.
- 5.4 An enhancement strategy has been recommended. This includes grassland management, creation of a new wildlife corridor, and hibernacula creation.
- 5.5 It is considered that the recommendations for mitigation and enhancement will ensure that no individuals will be harmed by the development and that their conservation status will remain unaffected by the development.

6.0 References

Froglife (1999) *Reptile survey: An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife. Halesworth.

Gent, T. & Gibson, S. eds. (1998) *Herpetofauna Workers Manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998) *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: maintaining best practice and lawful stanadards*. HGBI advisory notes for local reptile groups (ARGs).

Google Earth: www.earth.google.co.uk

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