

Reptile presence/absence surveys

Survey site:

Land Opposite Codmore Field House, Hill Farm Lane, Codmore Hill, West Sussex, RH20

Client:

MME Planning Services

Survey date:

April-June 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Horsham District Council. The proposal is described as:

The construction of a four-bedroom dwelling.

Survey legislation can be found in Appendix 4.

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updates site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	
See Proposal Plans in Appendix 1, Location plan in Appendix 2, Survey map in Appendix 3, and Legislation in Appendix 4.	
Limitations	<p>This survey aims to follow best practice guidance to confirm presence or likely-absence of reptiles and where present, characterise the site in terms of species and distribution, habitat suitability and context with the wider landscape. However, this information is collected at finite dates and times and provides an indication of the conditions on site only. This survey cannot provide an indication of population.</p> <p>There were no other specific limitations regarding access, weather, safety or equipment during the survey.</p>
<i>Scope of report</i>	<p>This report describes the suitability of the habitats on the site for reptiles and identifies the presence or likely absence of reptiles within the site. It identifies possible constraints in relation to reptiles as a result of the proposed development and summarises the requirements for further surveys and mitigation measures to inform subsequent mitigation proposals, achieve planning or other statutory consent and to comply with wildlife legislation.</p> <p>To achieve this, the following steps have been taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A field survey has been undertaken, including an assessment of habitat suitability and the deployment of artificial refugia and subsequent inspections to identify presence or likely absence of reptiles within the site. • An outline of potential impacts on reptiles has been provided, based on the proposed development. • Recommendations for further surveys and mitigation have been made. • Opportunities for the enhancement of the site for reptiles have been set out.
<i>Background and site context</i>	<p>The reptile survey has been informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (PEA/PRA) which was completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd (November 2024). Details of survey findings relating to reptiles below -</p> <p>EPSL data</p> <p>A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for protected reptiles within 2km of the site.</p>

	<p>Habitat suitability</p> <p>Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging, commuting, basking and refuge opportunities for reptiles. The grassland and patches of bramble provide elevated value for reptiles as these habitats provide a suitable structure for refuge, whilst also providing foraging and commuting opportunities. Furthermore, the site has good connectivity into the wider landscape where grassland, hedgerows, woodland edges and scrubby areas are present.</p> <p>Wider landscape</p> <p>The wider landscape consists of grasslands, hedgerows and woodland edges which are all of elevated ecological value and may provide important resources for reptiles. These adjacent habitats provide optimal foraging, commuting, and refuge opportunities for reptiles and are well connected to further suitable habitat in the wider landscape. The presence of reptiles utilising these adjacent habitats cannot be discounted.</p> <p>Foreseen impacts and recommendations</p> <p>Other woodland – mixed and other neutral grassland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats could result in a reduction in reptile habitat and could result in the fragmentation of the local landscape. Furthermore, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present. Reptile surveys will be required to determine presence or likely absence of reptiles on the site. This will comprise the deployment and monitoring of artificial refugia over seven visits and such surveys must be undertaken between April, May and September, in accordance with current survey guidelines (Gent & Gibson, 2003). The surveys are likely to be required before planning permission can be granted.</p> <p>The survey was required to inform a planning application for the construction of a four-bedroom dwelling. (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.</p> <p>The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 05592 20313 and has an area of approximately 0.303ha. The site comprises one building, large areas of grassland, woodland and scattered trees which connect to the wider landscape. Using aerial imagery, the local landscape can be characterised by a matrix of woodland (the closest being</p>
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	<p>0.19km to the west), agricultural fields, a horse-racing yard, residential and commercial developments, farm buildings, minor roads, a railway line and the village of Codmore Hill. The geological profile consists of slowly permeable, seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils within a belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The area is part of the Wealden Greensand National Character Area (120) with areas of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch. There is also a network of waterbodies, including the River Arun, within the wider landscape which likely enhance the area for a variety of species, including bats, amphibians and reptiles. A site located map is provided in Appendix 2.</p>
<i>Methodology</i>	<p>The survey was undertaken by Katie Belbin BA (Hons), Graduate Ecologist.</p> <p>The survey methodology is based on the Froglife Advice Sheet 10: Reptile Survey, an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation (Froglife, 1999), Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Gent, T. and Gibson, S., 2003) and the Reptile Habitat Management Handbook (Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. 2010).</p> <p>Refugia was placed around the site in suitable reptile habitat with each refuge numbered and the locations recorded using a GPS unit for monitoring, reporting and mapping. The refugia were steel 'tins' (corrugated steel sheets of approximately 50cm x 50cm square) and sheets of bitumen felt (approximately 50cm x 50cm square). The steel tins are regarded to have better habitat value for certain species (particularly snakes) due to their superior thermal retention. For this site, there is assessed to be 0.303ha of potentially suitable reptile habitat on site, comprising grassland and bramble scrub. Furthermore, the site has good connectivity into the wider landscape where grassland, hedgerows, woodland edges and scrubby areas are present.</p> <p>Therefore, a total of 2 tins and 20 felts were used. Locations of refugia are illustrated in Appendix 3.</p> <p>The refugia were deployed on 06/05/2025 and left to 'bed in' for a minimum of two weeks. Seven separate site visits were completed to search for reptiles between 19/05/2025 – 02/06/2025.</p> <p>The surveyor walked slowly and carefully checked the top and underneath of each refugia, as well as looking for reptiles between the refugia. The surveys were undertaken during the optimal period (typically in April, May and September) and in suitable weather conditions, when temperatures between 10°C and 18°C with intermittent or hazy sunshine and little or no wind, before 11am and after 3pm.</p>

Population size assessment and key reptile site characterisation	A population size assessment was completed in accordance with current guidance detailed within Froglife Advice sheet 10 (Froglife 1999). The population size assessment was determined as per the parameters outlined in Table 1.			
	Table 1: Example results of Reptile Surveys			
	Species	Low Population (Score 1) (Max count)	Good Population (Score 2) (Max count)	Exceptional Population (Score 3) (Max count)
	Adder (<i>Vipera berus</i>)	<5	5 -10	>10
	Grass snake (<i>Natrix natrix</i>)	<5	5 -10	>10
	Common lizard (<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>)	<5	5 -20	>20
	Slow worm (<i>Anguis fragilis</i>)	<5	5 -20	>20
	In accordance with current guidance detailed within Froglife Advice sheet 10 (Froglife 1999), to qualify as a “key reptile site”, the surveyed site must meet at least one of the following criteria: a. Supports three or more reptile species. b. Supports two snake species. c. Supports an exceptional population of one species. d. Supports an assemblage of species scoring at least 4 (see Table 2). e. Does not satisfy criteria a-d but is of regional importance due to local rarity.			
Field survey results	Survey dates and weather conditions are described in the table below:			

	Visit No.	Date and time	Weather conditions
	1	Monday 19 th May 2025 16:30pm - 17:00pm	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 70% Cloud Cover: 60% Wind Speed: 0.7mph Precipitation: None
	2	Thursday 22 nd May 2025 10:00am - 10:30am	Temp: 15°C Humidity: 65% Cloud Cover: 75% Wind Speed: 0mph Precipitation: None
	3	Friday 23 rd May 2025 10:00am - 10:30am	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 50% Cloud Cover: 30% Wind Speed: 1mph Precipitation: None
	4	Monday 26 th May 2025 10:00am - 10:30am	Temp: 16°C Humidity: 75% Cloud Cover: 50% Wind Speed: 0.5mph Precipitation: None
	5	Wednesday 28 th May 2025 10:00am - 10:30am	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 82% Cloud Cover: 85% Wind Speed: 0.2mph

			Precipitation: None
	6	Friday 30 th May 2025 10:00am - 10:30am	Temp: 18°C Humidity: 66% Cloud Cover: 30% Wind Speed: 0mph Precipitation: None
	7	Monday 2 nd June 2025 10:30am - 11:00am	Temp: 17°C Humidity: 60% Cloud Cover: 40% Wind Speed: 0.1mph Precipitation: None
No reptiles were identified during the surveys.			
<i>Survey results summary and Impact Assessment</i>	No reptiles were identified on the site. No impacts to reptiles are anticipated as a result of the proposed development.		
<i>Recommendations</i>	None. As no reptiles were identified during the surveys, the risk to reptiles is acceptably low and the proposed development can proceed without mitigation.		
<i>Enhancement measures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain existing habitats where possible. • Create reptile refugia using materials from site clearance, such as log piles. • Plant native scrub and species-rich, fruit-bearing grassland to provide compensatory shelter and foraging opportunities. • Establish native hedgerows to enhance commuting corridors for reptiles. 		

Appendix 1: Proposed development plan



Appendix 2: Site location



Reptile presence/absence surveys

Appendix 3: Survey map



Appendix 4: Legislation and planning policy

LEGAL PROTECTION

The sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* receive full protection under Habitats Regulations through their inclusion on Schedule

2. Regulation 41 prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of Schedule 2 species
- Deliberate disturbance of species in such a way as:
 - i. To impair their ability to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young;
 - ii. To impair their ability to hibernate or migrate
 - iii. To affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place

These species are also listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) and they are additionally protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level)
- Intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale.

Other native species of reptiles are protected solely under Schedule 5, Section 9(1) & (5) of the WCA, i.e. the adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix natrix*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*. It is prohibited to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these species.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development. The Framework specifies the need for protection of designated sites and priority habitats and species. An emphasis is also made on the need for ecological infrastructure through protection, restoration and re-creation. The protection and recovery of priority species (considered likely to be those listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species) is also listed as a requirement of planning policy.

In determining a planning application, planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by ensuring that: designated sites are protected from harm; there is appropriate mitigation or compensation where significant harm cannot be avoided; opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments are encouraged; and planning permission is refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including aged or veteran trees and also ancient woodland.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Biodiversity Duty

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of 'principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity'. This list is intended to assist decision makers such as public bodies in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act. Under the Act these habitats and species are regarded as a material consideration in determining planning applications. A developer must show that their protection has been adequately addressed within a development proposal.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Horsham District Planning Framework Local Plan (2015)

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) can be viewed here: [<https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/local-plan/read-the-current-local-plan>]

The following planning policies have implications for developers in relation to bats:

- [Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity - Policy 31] –

Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

1. Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing green infrastructure will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that new opportunities will be provided that mitigates or compensates for this loss and ensures that the ecosystem services of the area are retained.
2. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and /or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development

sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks.

3. Where felling of protected trees is necessary, replacement planting with a suitable species will be required.
4. a) Particular consideration will be given to the hierarchy of sites and habitats in the district as follows:
 - i. Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
 - ii. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs)
 - iii. Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and any areas of Ancient woodland, local geodiversity or other irreplaceable habitats not already identified in i & ii above.
- b) Where development is anticipated to have a direct or indirect adverse impact on sites or features for biodiversity, development will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - i. The reason for the development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and,
 - ii. That appropriate mitigation and compensation measures are provided.
5. Any development with the potential to impact Arun Valley SPA or the Mens SAC will be subject to a HRA to determine the need for an Appropriate Assessment. In addition, development will be required to be in accordance with the necessary mitigation measures for development set out in the HRA of this plan.

EFFECT OF LEGISLATION AND POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT WORKS

A European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) issued by the relevant countryside agency (i.e. Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage) will be required for works likely to affect the breeding sites or resting places of reptile species protected under Habitats Regulations. A licence will also be required for operations liable to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, rear young and hibernate). The licences are to allow derogation from the relevant legislation, but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficacy to be monitored.

Although not licensable, appropriate mitigation measures may also be required to prevent the intentional killing or injury of adder, grass snake, common lizard and slow worm, thus avoiding contravention of the WCA.

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