

Land North of Melton Drive, Storrington,
Chichester

Reptile Mitigation Strategy

Prepared in Respect of Condition 7 of
Application Reference DC/24/2006

July 2026

Quality Management

Client:	Matthew Homes
Project:	Land North of Melton Drive, Storrington
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Plan 20134/BNG1	Pre-development Habitat Mapping
Plan 20134/RMS1	Reptile Receptor Area and Enhancements Plan

1 Introduction

1.1 Background & Proposals

1.1.1 Aspect Ecology has been appointed by Matthew Homes Ltd to prepare a Reptile Mitigation Strategy in respect of Land North of Melton Drive, Storrington, West Sussex, centred at grid reference TQ 08821 15272, herein referred to as 'the site'. The site is the subject of outline planning permission for the demolition of a barn and erection of up to 62 dwellings (including affordable homes) with all matters reserved apart from access (Ref. DC/24/2006), granted by Horsham District Council, subject to conditions.

1.1.2 Condition 7 of the outline planning consent requires the production of a Reptile Mitigation Strategy and states:

'As part of each reserved matters application and prior to commencement of development, a Reptile Mitigation Strategy addressing the mitigation and translocation of reptiles has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Reptile Mitigation Strategy shall include the following:

- a) Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed works.*
- b) Review of site potential and constraints.*
- c) Detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) to achieve stated objectives.*
- d) Extent and location/area of proposed works on appropriate scale maps and plans.*
- e) Type and source of materials to be used where appropriate, e.g. native species of local provenance.*
- f) Where appropriate timetable for implementation demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of development.*
- g) Persons responsible for implementing the works.*
- h) Details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance of the Receptor area(s).*
- i) Where appropriate details for monitoring and remedial measures.*
- j) Details for disposal of any wastes arising from works.*

The Reptile Mitigation Strategy shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

Reason: To allow the Local Planning Authority to discharge its duties under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended) and Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and Policy 15 of the Storrington Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019).'

1.1.3 To ensure the above condition is satisfied, the following document provides a Reptile Mitigation Strategy, setting out the proposed safeguards and reasonable avoidance measures to be implemented to minimise the risk of harm to protected reptiles during development of the site.

2 Relevant Legislation & Licensing

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 All six species of British reptile are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, a higher level of protection is afforded to Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* and Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* than to Adder *Vipera berus*, Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica*, Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* and Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*.

2.1.2 For all British reptile species, Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains provisions making it an offence to intentionally:

- Kill or injure; or to
- Sell, offer for sale or trade any British reptile.

2.1.3 Because Slow-worm, Common Lizard, Grass Snake and Adder are relatively widespread British species, their habitat is not directly protected. Nevertheless, because of their partial protection, disturbing or destroying their habitat whilst they are present may lead to an offence.

2.2 Licensing

2.2.1 Common reptile species receive only partial protection under the domestic legislation and their habitats are not protected, and accordingly mitigation measures such as the implementation of habitat manipulation or translocation exercises do not require licensing.

3 Ecological Baseline

3.1 The site is located in the rural town of Storrington, West Sussex. The site is bound to the north and east by fields, whilst Melton Drive bounds the site to the south. To the west the site is bound by Fryern Road.

3.2 A UK Habitat Survey was completed by RSK in November 2023 (Ecological Impact Assessment, RSK, December 2024) and the site was noted to comprise a field consisting of other neutral grassland with areas of bramble scrub at the southern and eastern boundaries. Areas of lowland mixed deciduous woodland were recorded to the north of the field adjacent to the track. An area of other woodland; mixed was recorded within the east of the site, albeit the red line boundary for the reserved matters application now excludes the entirety of this woodland. A species-rich native hedgerow was recorded along the north-western boundary and a non-native ornamental hedgerow was recorded within the south-east of the site. Three derelict farm buildings were recorded within the north of the site, albeit the red line boundary for the reserved matters application now excludes all of these.

3.3 An update walkover survey was completed by Aspect Ecology in March 2026, which confirmed no material changes to the ecological status of the site since the time of the previous survey work. Suitable habitat for reptiles continues to comprise the main grassland field, areas of scrub and the hedgerow / woodland margins (see Plan 20134/BNG1).

3.4 Specific reptile survey work was previously carried out at the site by RSK, as detailed within the 2024 Ecological Impact Assessment. The survey work undertaken as part of the 2024 EclA confirmed the presence of a single Grass Snake within the site, which was assessed to constitute a “small” reptile population of site value only.

4 Working Methods to Safeguard Reptiles

4.1 Aims and Objectives

4.1.1 The Mitigation Strategy aims to demonstrate how individual reptiles will be safeguarded throughout construction works and the status of the reptile population at the site can be maintained in the long term.

4.1.2 To achieve these aims, the key overarching objectives of the strategy are as follows:

- Safeguard reptiles during site preparation and construction by carrying out a habitat manipulation exercise;
- Release reptiles to an identified, established receptor area on-site with connectivity to suitable off-site habitat, allowing reptiles to freely disperse through suitable habitats and the wider countryside;
- Provision of enhanced habitats/features for reptiles including new hibernacula and log piles within the receptor area and associated long-term management of the receptor area and on-site habitat to continue to support the reptile population.

4.2 Tenure and Responsibility

4.2.1 Matthew Homes will be responsible for the implementation of the measures set out below during construction. With regard to long-term management of the reptile receptor area post-completion, this will be the responsibility of an appointed Management Company who will be responsible for the ongoing management of the public open space and landscaping.

4.3 Receptor Area

4.3.1 The HGBI guidelines' preferred approach is for reptiles to be kept on site where possible, or relocated to a receptor site within close proximity of the donor site. The Reptile Mitigation Strategy proposes to keep all reptiles on site within protected habitat located as close to their original location as possible.

4.3.2 As such, there will be a protected reptile receptor area located within the site, so the displacement distance of reptiles will be kept to a minimum. The reptile receptor site shall be located along the northern boundary of the site, contiguous with suitable off-site habitat to the north (see Plan 20134/RMS1). The area currently comprises suitable reptile habitat, including grassland and hedgerow margin, and therefore does not require any additional preparation prior to commencement of works. However, to provide a temporary increase in carrying capacity during the works, 30 reptile refugia (comprising 0.5m x 0.5m squares of roofing felt or similar) will be deployed within the receptor area (to be removed upon completion of all soft landscape works).

4.3.3 In the longer term, permanent enhancement measures will be implemented, as detailed below, which will provide additional habitat, refuge, basking and hibernation for reptiles post-development. The enhancements will be completed prior to hibernation season and will include:

- Creation of two new hibernacula using logs/inert rubble or other suitable materials, in order to provide hibernation, shelter and basking habitats. Each hibernaculum will comprise a shallow excavation approximately 1m² and 0.4m deep, infilled with a mixture of rubble, bricks, logs, branches and vegetation cuttings to create a network of sheltered voids suitable for hibernation, refuge and basking.

- The above features will be partially covered with excavated spoil and turfs to promote stability and vegetation establishment, with multiple access points retained for reptiles and other fauna. Example specifications for hibernacula creation are provided on Plan 20134/RMS1.
- Creation of three new log piles to provide additional refuge, basking and foraging habitat for reptiles. Log piles will be created using a mixture of stacked logs, branches, brash and other woody arisings arranged in a loose but stable formation to a height of approximately 1m. Larger logs will form the base of the structures, with smaller woody material layered throughout to create internal cavities and sheltered spaces. Log piles may be partially covered with spoil and turfs to aid moisture retention and structural stability, with additional deadwood added periodically as required to maintain habitat functionality. (see Plan 20134/RMS1 for locations and specifications).
- The hibernacula and log piles will be located away from proposed footpaths. In addition, tall, tussocky grassland will be allowed to establish around the hibernacula and log piles to provide shelter, humidity buffering, habitat connectivity and protection from disturbance. Surrounding vegetation will be managed through a light-touch rotational cutting regime, with retained areas of uncut vegetation and periodic scrub control to maintain a varied sward structure and prevent excessive shading or encroachment.
- Planting of small pockets of native scrub planting to provide potential refuge features and enhance habitat diversity.

4.4 Habitat Manipulation Exercise

- 4.4.1 As set out above, the site has been recorded to support a small population of Grass Snake, located within the grassland field. As set out in the 2024 EclA, given the very low number of reptiles present at the site, a full trapping and translocation exercise is not considered appropriate. Instead, it is proposed that a phased habitat manipulation exercise be completed. This will protect the site's reptiles against killing and injury by displacing them into suitable retained habitat prior to construction / ground works commencing.
- 4.4.2 The habitat manipulation exercise will involve the phased cutting of vegetation within the affected areas of the development footprint, working towards the receptor site in stages. The first cut in each stage will involve vegetation being cut to approximately 15cm high to encourage reptiles to disperse to adjacent suitable areas of retained/nearby habitat, whilst also allowing for a fingertip search of the area. The second phase of cutting will reduce the vegetation to ground level. This will be repeated until the reptiles have been displaced into the receptor area. The exact cutting pattern will be determined on the ground by the supervising ecologist.
- 4.4.3 Following each initial cut to 15cm, a fingertip search of all potential reptile refuges will be undertaken. Any potential refuge features, e.g. piles of rubble, heavy logs, brash piles, will be fingertip-searched by an ecologist prior to being carefully disassembled. Any reptiles encountered during the exercise will be carefully rescued by the supervising ecologist and relocated to the receptor area.
- 4.4.4 The habitat manipulation exercise will be carried out under the supervision of a competent ecologist during the active reptile season (generally March to October, depending on prevailing weather).

- 4.4.5 Optimal conditions are generally dry or slightly overcast weather with light winds and ambient temperatures typically between approximately 10°C and 20°C, particularly during the morning after reptiles have emerged to bask, or in the late afternoon during warm weather. Prolonged heavy rain, persistent low temperatures (generally below c. 8–10°C), strong winds or very hot conditions (often above c. 25°C in exposed habitats) are usually unsuitable because reptiles become inactive, shelter deeply within vegetation or refugia, and are therefore less able to move away from working areas.
- 4.4.6 Works shall avoid the main winter hibernation period (typically November–February), when reptiles may be underground within hibernacula and at greater risk of injury or mortality if earthworks or excavation are undertaken.

4.5 Fencing

- 4.5.1 Once reptiles have been displaced into the receptor area, temporary exclusion fencing will be installed (see Plan 20134/EMS1 for location and specifications) to prevent reptiles from re-entering the construction footprint. The fencing will be retained until construction has been completed. Removal of the fencing shall take place between spring and autumn during suitable weather conditions so as to avoid the hibernation period, as there is a risk reptiles may hibernate within shrinkage gaps at the base of the fencing. Weekly fence checks will be carried out throughout the construction period by the Site Manager or suitably appointed deputy and any damages or failures observed will be immediately rectified to ensure the fencing remains functionally intact.

4.6 Animal Welfare

- 4.6.1 The welfare of any animals captured during the habitat manipulation exercise is paramount. Upon capture, animals will be either relocated immediately to the receptor area, or otherwise transferred into vivaria, with grass and other vegetation to provide suitable conditions, which are kept out of direct sunlight to prevent over-heating. During the destructive search, the ecologist will have a range of buckets, containers and pillowcases/soft cloth sacks suitable for the transport of any captured reptiles (or other vulnerable wildlife).
- 4.6.2 The number of individuals placed in any one vivarium or container will be limited according to the size of individuals and vivarium, with small numbers of individuals within a single vivarium and these always being of the same species and roughly similar in size. The reptiles will then be transported to and released at the closest receptor area to their point of capture at the first opportunity.

4.7 Disposal of Waste

- 4.7.1 Care shall be taken during the disposal of waste arising from the construction phase to minimise the risk of harm to reptiles through direct mortality, entrapment, or disturbance of suitable resting, basking, or hibernation habitat. All waste materials, including vegetation arisings, soil stockpiles, construction spoil, and general site waste, shall be stored in designated, demarcated areas located away from the reptile receptor area, and shall be positioned on previously disturbed or hardstanding surfaces wherever practicable.
- 4.7.2 Waste materials shall be subject to regular inspection and controlled removal to prevent the formation of inadvertent refugia, such as voids within stockpiles, under tarpaulins, or within accumulated debris, which could attract reptiles.

- 4.7.3 Any waste storage exceeding short-term duration shall be managed to ensure that materials remain compact, contained, and not left undisturbed for sufficient periods to allow occupation by fauna. Particular care shall be taken during clearance operations of vegetation or ground disturbance areas, where reptiles may be present at ground level or within debris.
- 4.7.4 All waste removal operations within or adjacent to suitable reptile habitat shall be preceded by appropriate ecological checks, undertaken by suitably qualified personnel where required, particularly during the active season. Vegetation arisings shall be processed in a manner that prevents prolonged on-site storage in loose piles, and shall be removed from site or redistributed only under controlled ecological supervision.
- 4.7.5 If waste materials are required to be temporarily stockpiled, they shall be placed in low-risk locations, maintained in a flattened and disturbed state to discourage occupation, and inspected prior to relocation or disposal.
- 4.7.6 Construction site housekeeping shall be maintained to a high standard throughout the works to avoid accumulation of unmanaged materials that could provide shelter opportunities for reptiles and other fauna.

5 Initial Aftercare and Long-term Maintenance

- 5.1 No immediate, initial aftercare is required within the reptile receptor area because it will already be suitable for reptiles. In the long-term the reptile receptor area shall be managed as a structurally diverse mosaic habitat that provides both foraging and refuge opportunities while preventing ecological succession to uniform grassland or dense scrub. The primary objective is to maintain a balance of shorter sward for basking, tussocky vegetation for cover, and scattered scrub and edge habitats, alongside permanent refugia such as log piles and hibernacula.
- 5.2 Vegetation management shall be rotational and phased, typically involving annual or biennial cutting of grassland areas in late summer, with cuts undertaken in strips or blocks to retain continuous refuge cover. Cutting heights shall generally be maintained at 50–100mm in shorter-sward areas to provide basking opportunities, while tussocky and refuge areas shall be left uncut or cut to a minimum height of 150–300mm, ensuring retention of dense cover. Arisings shall be removed to avoid nutrient enrichment. Scrub shall be controlled on a cyclical basis (generally every 2–3 years), retaining a proportion of structural diversity but preventing excessive encroachment that would reduce open basking areas or fragment habitat connectivity.
- 5.3 Hibernacula and refuge features shall receive periodic inspection and maintenance to ensure continued functionality, particularly in relation to stability, drainage, and vegetation cover. Surrounding buffer vegetation shall be retained to reduce disturbance and maintain favourable microclimates. Where necessary, features shall be repaired or augmented over time rather than fully replaced, to preserve established use by reptiles.
- 5.4 Grassland over the reptile hibernacula shall be managed as tussocky rough grassland with varied sward structure, to provide suitable cover, humidity buffering and basking opportunities for reptiles. Management shall comprise a light-touch rotational cut regime, typically once annually or every 2–3 years during late autumn or winter, with arisings removed to prevent nutrient enrichment and sections of uncut vegetation retained to maintain habitat continuity and structural diversity. Scrub and invasive species shall be controlled periodically to prevent excessive shading or root penetration.

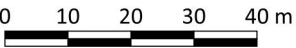
- 5.5 Log piles shall be managed as permanent habitat features to provide refugia, basking, sheltering and foraging opportunities for reptiles and other fauna. Management shall comprise periodic inspection to ensure the piles remain structurally intact, whilst retaining a range of timber sizes, decay stages and internal void spaces.
- 5.6 Additional material shall be added as required to compensate for natural decomposition over time and maintain habitat functionality. Vegetation immediately surrounding the log piles shall be managed to retain a varied sward structure and avoid complete shading or excessive scrub encroachment.
- 5.7 Given the small size of the existing reptile population, no formal reptile monitoring is proposed. However, the habitats supporting reptiles will be monitored during establishment and at periodic intervals thereafter to assess habitat condition and suitability for reptiles. Management shall be adjusted in response to observed changes in vegetation structure.
- 5.8 Proposed landscape planting to be carried out within the reptile receptor area will require pre-commencement checks and potential supervision by an ecologist to avoid inadvertent harm to reptiles.

Plan 20134/BNG1:

Pre-development Habitat Mapping



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Grassland: Other neutral grassland (4.3700ha)
 - Heathland and shrub: Bramble scrub (0.1275ha)
 - Woodland and forest: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (0.0825ha)
 - Urban: Developed land; sealed surface: Hardstanding (0.0100ha)
 - Urban: Developed land; sealed surface (0.0225ha)
 - Rural Tree [4]
 - Hedgerows / Tree Lines: Species-rich native hedgerow (0.21km)
 - Hedgerows / Tree Lines: Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (0.06km)



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Land North of Melton Drive,
Storrington
Pre-development Habitat Mapping

PROJECT

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20134/BNG1

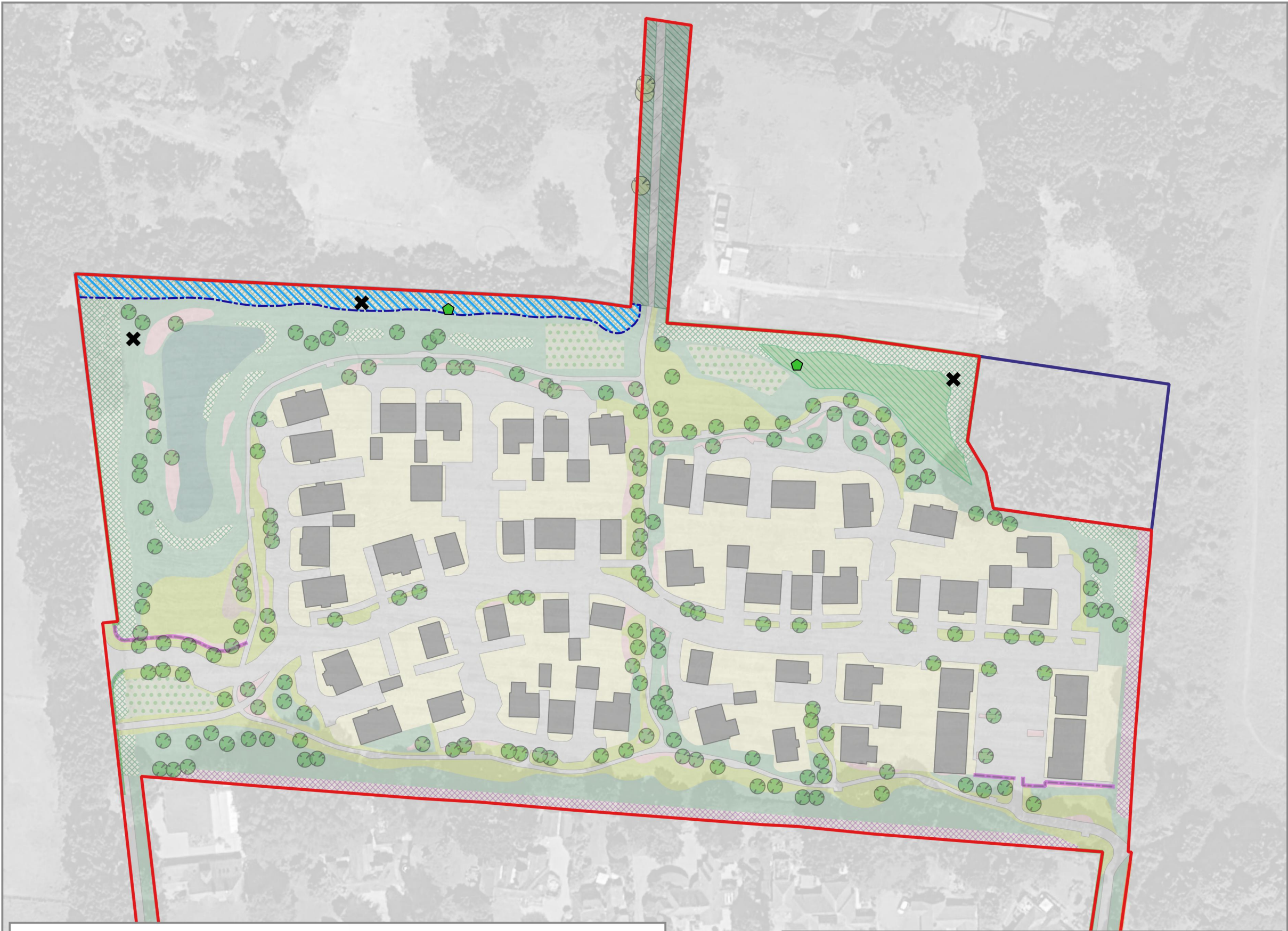
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Plan 20134/RMS1:

Reptile Receptor Area and Enhancements Plan



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Wider Survey Area
 - Reptile receptor zone
 - Reptile Fence
 - Log Pile
 - Reptile Hibernaculum

Reptile Hibernaculum

The design mimics artificial and natural conditions in which reptiles have frequently been found over-wintering. Dimensions should not be less than 2m length x 1m width x 1m height. The illustrated design would be suitable for locating on an impermeable substrate. On free-draining substrates the design is largely similar, but the bulk of the fill is sited in an excavated depression in the ground. Hibernacula should ideally be positioned in suitable terrestrial habitat for reptiles.

Log piles

Log piles constructed using cut brush and logs, preferably from oak, beech, or fruit tree, as these support the richest insect communities. These log piles also provide sheltering opportunities for reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.

Dimensions: 2000mm x 2000mm x 500mm

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Land North of Melton Drive,
Storrington

Reptile Receptor Area and
Enhancements Plan

20134/RMS1

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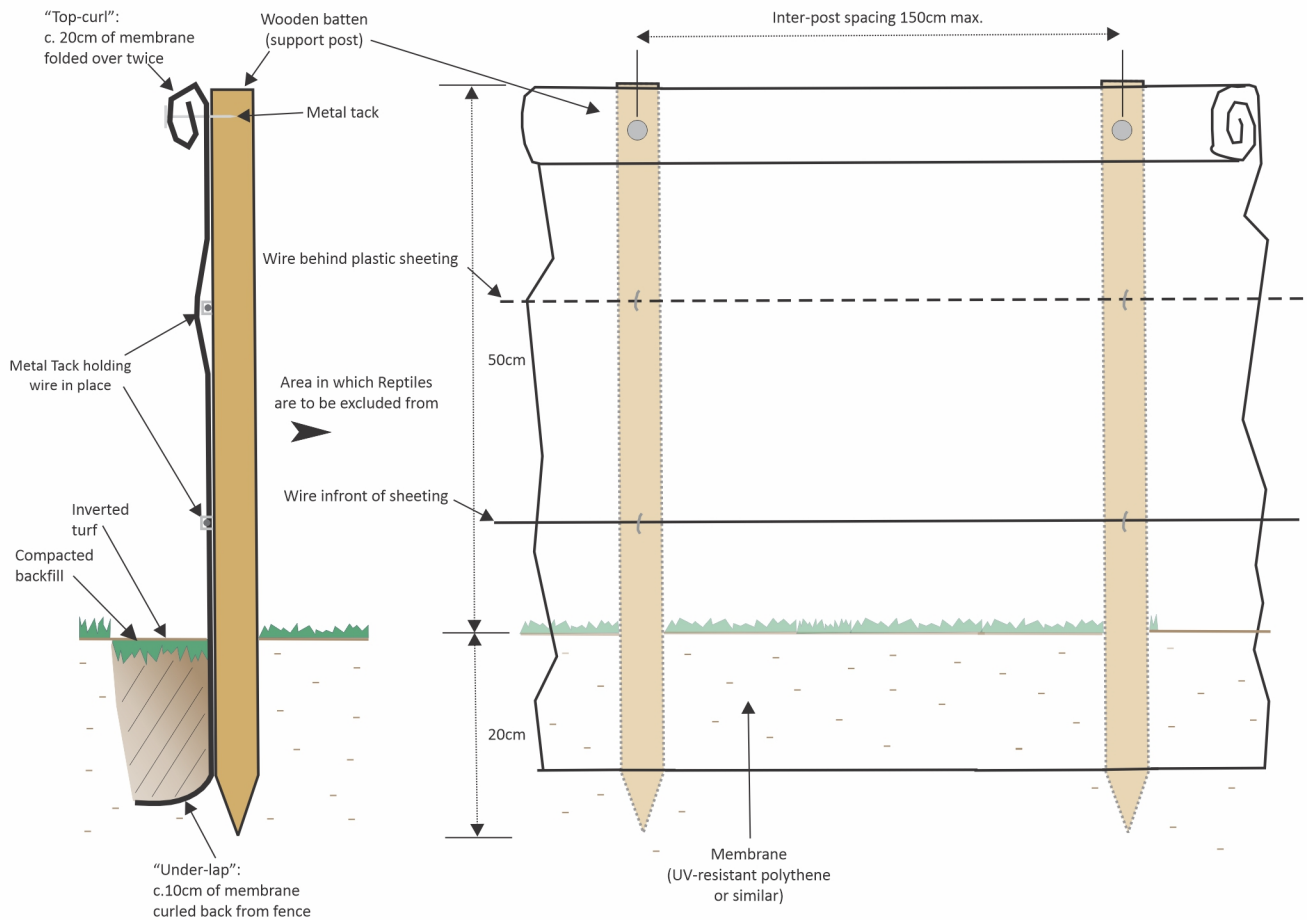
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Exclusion Fencing



CROSS-SECTION

FRONT VIEW

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