



Land at the Old Brickworks, Henfield

Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Survey 2024

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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 DMH Stallard Ltd to undertake a reptile presence/likely absence survey for an area of land to the North of The Old Brickworks, Shoreham Road, Henfield, BN5 9SE. This follows a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) carried out by the Ecology Partnership in November 2023.
- 1.2 This report presents the results of the reptile surveys on site in 2024, which aim specifically to provide a current understanding of the population of reptile species onsite.
- 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 is located on the western side of the A2037, south of the town of Henfield, and is approximately 3.27ha in size. The site is comprised of horse grazed pasture fields, with edges comprising areas of bramble, tall ruderal or hedgerows. It is set on the boundary of agricultural landscape to the north and west, and new and established industrial developments to the east and south with Shoreham Road running along the east boundary. The agricultural land includes both pasture and arable, with areas of woodland, scrub and mature hedgerows/treelines, as well as low-density rural residential settlements. The industrial developments have minimal landscaping within the sites and are predominantly surfaced with concrete and tarmac.
- 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
(Taken from Google Satellite, August 2024)*

Description of Proposed Development

- 1.6 The eastern and northern areas of site will be part of a re-development of the industrial facilities, with 12 new commercial units and associated parking/soft landscaping being created. The western field and part of the adjacent field being entirely retained as green space, for biodiversity net gain.

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 between 17th May and 22nd July 2024. Prior to the commencement of the survey, the site was set up with artificial refugia (roofing felt) for reptiles on 30th April 2024, mats were placed in areas of suitable reptile habitat and around the boundary habitats. The approximate mat locations are marked in yellow in Figure 2.



*Figure 2: Locations of the reptile mats during the survey (yellow line) on site (red line).
Taken from Google Satellite, August 2024.*

- 2.2 Reptile mats were placed within areas of suitable habitat, using the surveyor's professional judgement (Figure 2). Fields containing grazing horses limited the survey efforts due to likelihood of reptile mats being trampled.
- 2.3 The mats were left in place for a bedding-in period of two weeks prior to the commencement of the reptile survey, meeting the required period as per standing advice from Natural England. The timing and number of surveys completed were based on guidelines produced by Froglife (1999) and Gent and Gibson (1998).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 In the event that reptiles were found on site, the size of the reptile population can be estimated using the Froglife (1999) scoring system. This assumes a density of 10 refugia per hectare. A population size class assessment, which is based on the number of adults recorded in one survey visit, can be made using Table 1.

Table 1: Population class assessment categories (Froglife 1999)

	Low population (Score 1)	Good population (Score 2)	Exceptional population (Score 3)
Adder	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 - 20	>20
Grass snake	<5	5 -10	>10
Slow worm	<5	5 - 20	>20

3.0 Results

3.1 Table 2 below documents the timing and weather conditions of the reptile survey visits, and Table 3 provides the reptiles identified on site during the survey.

Table 2: Reptile survey results (2024)

Visit number	Date	Temperature (°C)	Conditions	Reptile numbers
1	17/05/2024	18	Cloud cover: 1 Okta Wind speed: 2 Beau Precipitation: None	-
2	24/05/2024	18	Cloud cover: 4 Okta Wind speed: 1 Beau Precipitation: None	1 male slowworm 1 female slowworm
3	07/06/2024	18	Cloud cover: 2 Okta Wind speed: 2 Beau Precipitation: None	-
4	14/06/2024	17	Cloud cover: 6 Okta Wind speed: 3 Beau Precipitation: None	1 male slowworm
5	21/06/2024	20	Cloud cover: 0 Okta Wind speed: 1 Beau Precipitation: None	1 male slowworm
6	01/07/2024	19	Cloud cover: 7 Okta Wind speed: 1 Beau Precipitation: None	-
7	22/07/2024	16	Cloud cover: 2 Okta Wind speed: 1 Beau Precipitation: None	2 male slowworm

3.2 Over 7 visits, the peak count of slowworms was two. The peak count does not include the number of sub-adult and juvenile individuals. Overall, the cumulative count of all reptiles across site was six slowworms.

3.3 According to the Froglife criteria, it is considered that the site supports a **'low'** population of slow worm.

3.4 As shown in Figure 3 below, slow worms were primarily found on the Western side of site, within the retained habitat area.



Figure 3: Spatial results across all surveys (Google Satellite, 2024)

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 The site covered approximately 3.27ha and was found to contain suitable reptile habitat. Proposals involve the clearance of the eastern section of site and construction of 12 commercial units and associated parking and landscaping. The westernmost field and a portion of the adjacent one will be retained as green habitat.
- 4.2 Given the large area of site to be cleared and suitable habitat present, a reptile presence/likely absence survey was recommended. This undertaken within areas of suitable habitat within the red-line boundary of the site between 17th May and 22nd July 2024.
- 4.3 The size of the reptile population can be assessed using the Froglife (1999) scoring system. This system assumes a density of 10 refugia per hectare. Given that 35 reptile mats were established on site which totals 3.27ha, it is considered that the survey effort is sufficient to support a mitigation strategy based on the data.

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- 4.4 One of the four widespread species of reptile were found on site: slow worm. No evidence of any other reptile species such as adder, smooth snake, or sand lizard was found on site, and it is considered that their potential to be present within the site to be negligible owing to the lack of sandy heathland habitat.
- 4.5 For a site to be classified as a 'key reptile site', the site must meet one of the following criteria outlined by Froglife (1999):
- Supports three or more reptile species.
 - Supports two snake species.
 - Supports an exceptional population of one species (Table 1)
 - Supports an assemblage of species scoring at least four (Table 1)
 - Does not satisfy the above but is of particular importance due to local rarity (e.g. in the East Midlands of England, adders are very rare so even "low" populations should be designated as Key Sites).
- 4.6 Evidence of only one species of reptile was found onsite: slow worms classified as a '**low**' population. Therefore, the site does not meet the criteria of a 'key reptile site'.
- 4.7 The site contained only a low population of slowworms and there is a significant portion of suitable habitat being retained in the western area of site. This retained area is also where the majority of reptile recordings were made across the survey. As such, it is deemed that reptiles on site can be suitably protected from injury or mortality during works, by the enactment and following of a suitable system of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs). This system of measures should include the following:
- All currently unsuitable areas of grassland within the impacted portion of site should be kept unsuitable (i.e. short-sward), via either mowing or grazing, to discourage reptiles from using it.
 - A toolbox talk should be given on site during the first day of vegetation clearance, regarding the legality surrounding reptiles, habitat requirement, basic identifying features and procedure if they are found.
 - All vegetation clearance should be conducted moving from east to west on site, to allow reptiles to move either towards suitable retained habitat on-site or suitable off-site habitat.

- Unsuitable short-sward grassland (c. <5cm) can be cleared without direct ecological supervision. However, any tussocky grassland, taller sward grass, or edge habitat (shrubs, taller ruderal, or scrub) must be cleared under direct ecological supervision.
- Any suitable reptile habitat should be cleared in a staged cut, in suitable conditions (dry and above 8°C), across five days:
 - Day 1: Strim to 200mm
 - Day 2: No works to vegetation to allow for reptiles or other small animals to vacate site.
 - Day 3: Strim to ground.
 - Day 4: No works to vegetation to allow for reptiles or other small animals to vacate site.
 - Day 5: End of sensitive vegetation clearance process.
- All significant materials generated by vegetation clearance should not be left on the ground. They should ideally be removed from site within 24 hours, but if this is not possible, then they should be stored within a skip or similar.
- All building materials brought on to site should be stored, raised off the ground, so as to limit their availability as refugia piles.
- All excavations should either be covered overnight or have an egress ramp placed within them, to prevent any reptiles or other small mammals from becoming trapped. Likewise, all fitted pipes should be blocked until the plumbing/drainage system is complete, to prevent any reptiles or small mammals/amphibians from becoming trapped.

Enhancement Strategy

- 4.8 The western portion of site is to be retained as green habitat and enhanced as part of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. It is recommended that this grassland be with at least two tussock forming grasses included within the species mix, such as cocksfoot, meadow fescue, tall fescue, soft brome, false brome, or similar such native, tussock forming species. This would provide the grassland habitat structure valuable to reptiles for basking, foraging and refuge.
- 4.9 Habitat piles should be installed within greenspaces for use as refugia by reptiles, particularly the retained grassland in the west of site. 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 17th May and 22nd July 2024.
- 5.2 The reptile survey found an '**low**' population of slowworms onsite. To ensure no reptiles are harmed by the development, works should be conducted under a system of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs). This strategy is laid out within this report.
- 5.3 General site enhancements have also been recommended to provide new opportunities for a reptiles and a wider range of wildlife post-development. Greenspaces within the development area should incorporate habitats and features making them suitable for reptiles and other wildlife, all to be managed in a way that will sustain their wildlife value.

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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