

Southwater Phase 5

Reptile Mitigation Strategy

July 2022



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Report Ref: DFA22032

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Background.....	1
2	EXISTING ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS.....	2
2.1	Habitats	2
2.2	Reptiles	2
3	PROPOSED MITIGATION SCHEME	3
3.1	Rational.....	3
3.2	Capture Scheme	3
3.3	Receptor Site	3
4	SUMMARY	4

TABLES

Table 1.	Summary of reptile survey results.....	2
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FIGURES

Figure 1.	Site Plan	..5
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by Berkeley Homes (Southern) Ltd to provide ecological advice in relation to a proposed development known as Phase 5, Southwater, referred to herein as the 'Site'. BHS have a planning application pending in relation to the construction of 80 dwellings and associated infrastructure for the Site (Ref: DC/19/2464). As part of the pending planning application, several draft conditions have been proposed, of which, Condition 5 is particularly relevant:

Condition 5

Pre-commencement Condition: No development shall take place (including any demolition, ground works, site clearance) until a Biodiversity Method Statement for Protected and Priority species (reptiles and compensation of lost Ecological Mitigation Area) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The content of the method statement shall include the following:

- *purpose and objectives for the proposed works;*
- *detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including, where relevant, type and source of materials to be used);*
- *extent and location of proposed works shown on appropriate scale maps and plans; timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction;*
- *persons responsible for implementing the works;*
- *initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant);*
- *disposal of any wastes arising from works. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.*

- 1.1.2 As part of the ongoing works associated with BHS wider permitted Southwater scheme, Berkeley Homes is proposing to utilise part of the Phase 5 land as a temporary soil storage area. As such, it was decided that the areas and ecological receptors contained within Condition 5 which would be affected by the proposed soil storage works should be addressed prior to the soil storage works commencing. After a review of the proposed works, it was determined that there would be the potential for direct impacts on reptiles as a result of the works. Therefore, prior to the works commencing a reptile mitigation strategy has been devised to avoid accidental harm, injury or death to reptiles.
- 1.1.3 The proposed mitigation scheme is inline with any that would be undertaken as a result of the grant of permission for the pending application DC/19/2464.

2 EXISTING ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

2.1 Habitats

- 2.1.1 The Site comprises former agricultural land which has been left fallow throughout the current farming year. The southern section of the Site is bordered by a hedge line with numerous semi-mature trees; an outgrown hedge forms the north-eastern boundary, whilst the northern site boundary is partially formed by a second hedge line with numerous tree; the western section of the northern boundary is open onto another arable field.
- 2.1.2 The northwest corner of the Site was formed into a Works Compound to service Phases 3.2 and 4; these works were undertaken in early 2022.
- 2.1.3 Towards the north of the western boundary is an area that forms part of the ecological mitigation area for the wider Southwater Phases 1 – 2.
- 2.1.4 The habitats within the Site are depicted on Figure 1, with full descriptions presented in ‘*Land West of Worthing Road, Southwater Phase 5: Ecological Assessment*’ (Derek Finnie Associates, Report Ref: DFA19080V2) hence are not repeated here.

2.2 Reptiles

- 2.2.1 Three species of reptile have been identified across the Site, namely grass snake, common lizard and slow worm. All three species were recorded at relatively low densities as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of reptile survey results

Visit No.	Date	Grass snake			Common lizard			Slow worm		
		M	F	SA	M	F	SA	M	F	SA
1	14 th May				2	3			3	
2	19 th May		1			2		1		
3	15 th June				1	3			2	
4	8 th July		1			2	1		2	2
5	21 st July				2	4		1	4	
6	18 th August		1	1	3	2	1		1	4
7	9 th September				1	1			2	3

- 2.2.2 Grass snake were restricted to the northern boundary of the Site, with all records associated with the base of hedgerow H4 (Figure 1), whilst common lizard were only recorded at the base of H3. Slow worm, however, were distributed more widely over the Site, with records close to H1, H3 and H4.

3 PROPOSED MITIGATION SCHEME

3.1 Rational

- 3.1.1 To avoid incidental harm, injury or death to the low population of reptiles known to be present within the Site, it is proposed to undertake a capture and exclusion exercise across the entire Site. Artificial refugia will be used, in conjunction with a limited amount of habitat manipulation, to catch the reptile population within the Site and transfer them to a dedicated receptor area. The receptor area will be fenced off for the duration of the works to prevent reptiles re-entering the soil storage zone.

3.2 Capture Scheme

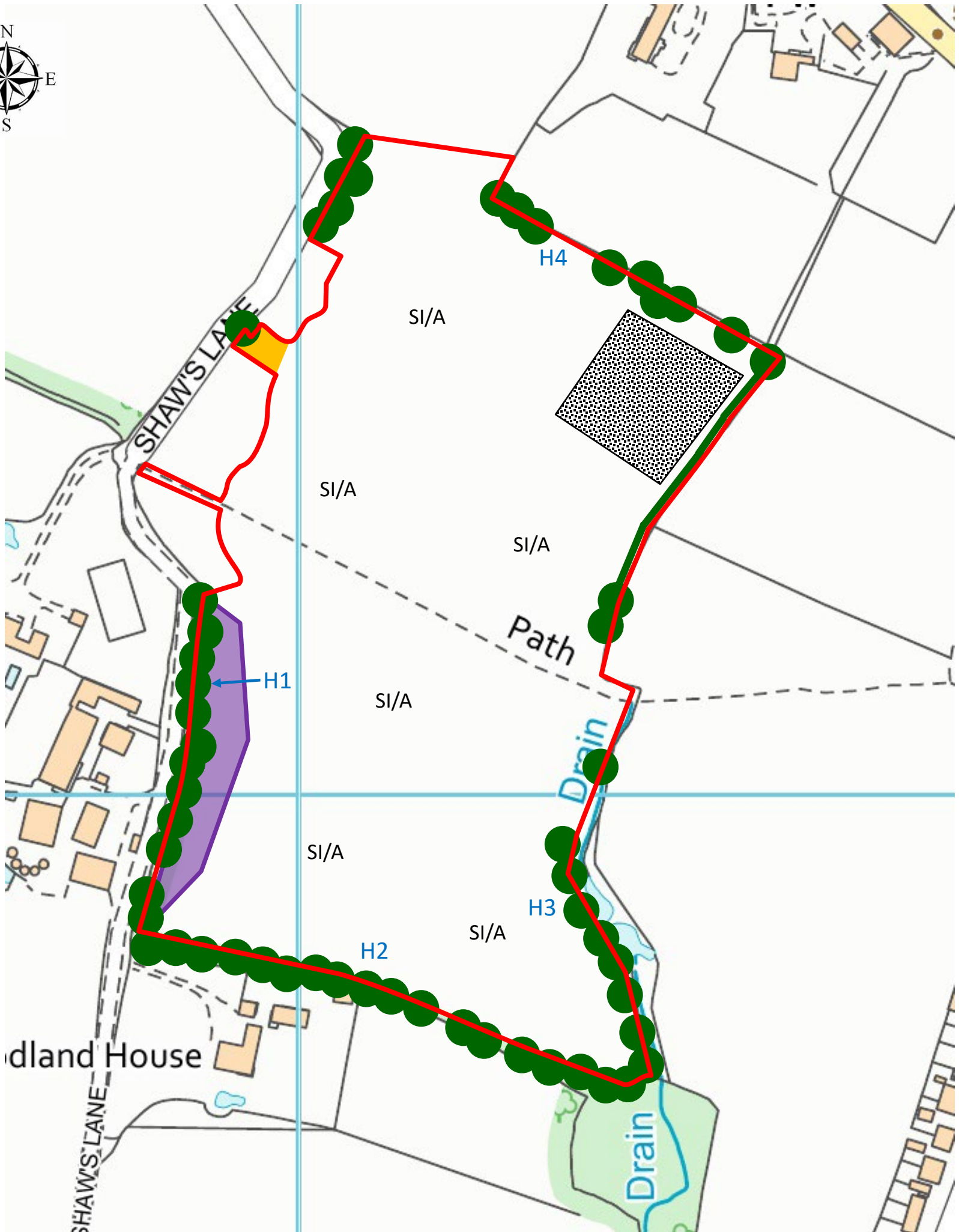
- 3.2.1 Artificial refugia, in the form of heavy-duty roofing felts measuring approximately 0.5m², will be placed around the entire Site at equivalent density of approximately 100ha⁻¹. The refugia will be placed in areas deemed to be suitable for reptiles, although care will be taken to ensure adequate coverage is achieved across the entire site. Once installed, the felts will be left to bed in for at least seven days.
- 3.2.2 The refugia will be checked on suitable days, deemed to be sunny or partially sunny, with little wind and a temperature between 8°C and 19°C. Any reptiles encountered during these checks will be caught and immediately transferred to the receptor site where they will be released into suitable habitat. Given the assumed low population density within the Site, 30 days of capture will be undertaken initially; however, capture will extend beyond this time frame, if necessary, until five capture free days have been achieved.

3.3 Receptor Site

- 3.3.1 A dedicated receptor site will be created within the southwest of the Site (Figure 1) where any reptiles encountered will be released and held initially. Semi-permanent reptile fence will be installed around the perimeter of the receptor area to prevent reptile re-entering the soil storage zone. However, the western boundary of the area will remain unfenced which will allow reptile access along the hedgerow.
- 3.3.2 Prior to the commencement of the capture programme, a series of improvements to the receptor area will be undertaken, including the construction of two hibernacula and three log piles. Strimming will also be undertaken, with approximately one third of the Site being strimmed down to 50mm to create a structurally diverse sward within the receptor area.
- 3.3.3 Any reptiles will be retained within the receptor area until such times as works have ceased within the Phase 5 area. At this time, the semi-permanent fence will be removed and the reptile allowed to colonise the wider ecology mitigation area that would be created as part of the wider scheme.

4 SUMMARY

- 4.1.1 The implementation of the reptile mitigation strategy will ensure that no infringement of the relevant legislation occurs during the soil storage works, as well as leading maintaining the known population at favourable conservation status.



Legend:

- SI/A Semi improved grassland/fallow arable
- Species rich grassland
- Broad-leaved hedgerow tree
- Hedgerow with reference number
- Site compound
- Reptile receptor area

Drawing No: Figure 1

Title: Site Layout

Date: July 2022

Project: Southwater Phase 5

Client: Berkeley Homes



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