



Reptile Mitigation Report

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Report	Reptile Mitigation Strategy
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Executive Summary

Ecosupport Ltd were commissioned to undertake a reptile survey at Hayes Lane, Slinfold. After a walkover of the site conducted by AIDash identified it as being suitable for reptiles, surveys were completed from April to May 2026, showing there to be a low population of both Lizards and Slow Worms. As reptiles are legally protected in the UK and their presence is a material consideration when assessing a planning application, it is necessary to ensure they are not harmed because of development-related activities. This mitigation strategy details the measures which will be undertaken to avoid harm to reptiles during the development and maintain their conservation status within the local area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief

Ecosupport Ltd was instructed to carry out a reptile survey at the site known as Hayes Lane, Slinfold in order to determine the presence/absence of reptiles on site. This mitigation strategy outlines the survey work undertaken, the results and any further mitigation/compensation required.

1.2 Aims

The aim of the Phase II reptile surveys undertaken by Ecosupport (2026) were to confirm the presence/likely absence of these protected species within the site.

NB If the development does not take place within 18 months¹ of this report then the findings may need to be updated.

1.3 Site Description & Location

The site comprises of a parcel of grassland located to the east of Hayes Lane, Slinfold, Horsham, RH13 0S1 (OS grid reference TQ 11813 30679) (**Fig 1**). The site is bound by Hayes Lane to the west, residential dwellings to the north with further fields to the south and east. A public footpath runs along the northern and southern boundaries of the site, as well as through the centre of the field. The wider environ is rural, with the site located on the outskirts of Slinfold, a village to the west of Horsham.

Figure 1. Approximate redline boundary of the site (Google Satellite, 2026).



¹ <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

1.4 Development Proposals

The proposals are for the erection of 38 dwellings, (including 13 on-site affordable housing units), together with access from Hayes Lane, vehicle and cycle parking, landscaping, open space and play provision, sustainable drainage, and re-alignment of Public Right of Way.

2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION & POLICY

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019) (as amended)

This instrument makes changes to the three existing instruments which transpose the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives so that they continue to work (are operable) upon the UK's exit from the European Union (EU). These include The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This instrument also amends section 27 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to ensure existing protections continue. The intention is to ensure habitat and species protection and standards as set out under the Nature Directives are implemented in the same way or an equivalent way when the UK exits the EU.

This transposes the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) into UK domestic law. It provides protection for sites and species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill or injure species listed in Schedule 2 or to damage or destroy their breeding sites or shelter. It is also illegal to deliberately disturb these species in such a way that is likely to significantly impact on the local distribution or abundance or affect their ability to survive, breed and rear or nurture their young.

In order for activities that would be likely to result in a breach of species protection under the regulations to legally take place, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence must first be obtained from Natural England.

2.1.2 The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)

This is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity is protected within the UK. Protected fauna and flora are listed under Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Act. They include all species of bats, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat whilst it is occupying a roost or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost. Similarly, this Act makes it an offence to kill or injure any species of British reptiles and also makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy their eggs and nests (whilst in use or being built).

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) states that it is an offence to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9 part II of the Act. This list over 30 plants including Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*).

2.2 Policy

2.2.1 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

Chapter 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity, the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, minimising impacts on and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity including by incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

The NPPF states that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites and land should be allocated with the least environmental or amenity value and take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale.

To protect and enhance biodiversity, plans should identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

The NPPF states determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a SSSI, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSIs;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists;
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Potential SPAs and possible SACs, listed or proposed Ramsar sites and sites required as compensatory measures for the previous should be given the same protection as habitats sites.

2.2.2 Local – Horsham District Council

As the site falls under the jurisdiction of Horsham District council, the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) applies. This document outlines the following policies that are relevant to the site.

Policy 25 Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

The Natural Environment and landscape character of the District, including the landscape, landform and development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats will be protected against inappropriate development. The Council will support development proposals which:

1. Protects, conserves and enhances the landscape and townscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.
2. Maintain and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network and addresses any identified deficiencies in the District.
3. Maintains and enhances the existing network of geological sites and biodiversity, including safeguarding existing designated sites and species, and ensures no net loss of wider biodiversity and provides net gains in biodiversity where possible.
4. Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the South Downs National Park

Policy 26 Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection

Outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location, and in addition meet one of the following criteria:

1. Support the needs of agriculture or forestry;
2. Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
3. Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or
4. Enable the sustainable development of rural areas.

In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and/or enhances, the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located, including;

1. The development pattern of the area, its historical and ecological qualities, tranquillity and sensitivity to change;
2. The pattern of woodlands, fields, hedgerows, trees, waterbodies and other features; and 3. The landform of the area.

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 (SNClIs), 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.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Phase II Reptile Surveys

3.1.1 Reptile Surveys

Reptile Surveys were previously carried out in April-May 2026. Reptile surveys undertaken by Ecosupport were carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines as stated in various resources (Froglife, 1999) (Gent & Gibson, 1998). Artificial refugia comprising of bitumen roofing felt were distributed throughout the suitable reptile habitat on site. The distribution of 45 pieces of refugia throughout the identified suitable habitat is shown in **Fig 2**. Seven visits to the site were subsequently undertaken during suitable weather conditions during which all the refugia were checked for the presence of reptiles in combination with a visual observation transect

Survey dates and weather conditions for each reptile survey is provided in **Table 1** with locations of the reptile artificial refugia shown in **Fig 3**, below.

Table 1. Survey dates and weather conditions when surveys were taken place. (Ecosupport 2026).

Survey No	Date	Time	Temperature (°C)	Wind (Beaufort scale)	Cloud cover (%)	Precipitation (%)
1	10/04/26	13:30	13	0	0	None
2	14/04/26	13:30	14	2	80	None
3	17/04/26	13:30	15	2	50	None
4	21/04/26	9:23	9	1	85	None
5	24/05/26	9:00	16	1	0	None
6	01/05/26	12:43	20	1	0	None
7	06/05/26	14:00	17	1	0	None

Figure 3. Approximate locations of the reptile refugia (yellow circles) placed around suitable habitat for reptiles within the site (Ecosupport 2026).



3.2 Limitations

There were not considered to be any limitations of the survey effort undertaken, with all surveys undertaken during the optimal survey period during suitable weather conditions.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Reptiles

4.1.1 Presence/Absence Survey

The surveys undertaken by Ecosupport were carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines as stated in various resources (Froglife 1999) (Gent & Gibson 1998) in April-May 2026. 45 artificial refugia comprising of bitumen roofing felt were distributed throughout the suitable reptile habitats on site. Seven visits to the site were subsequently undertaken during suitable weather conditions during which all the refugia were checked for the presence of reptiles in combination with a visual observation transect.

The results of the reptile presence / likely absence survey are presented below in **Table 2** with the survey refugia distribution and numberings provided in **Fig 4**.

Table 2. Results of the reptile surveys undertaken on site by Ecosupport between April and May 2026.

Date	Time	Temp (°C)	Weather Conditions (Wind in Beaufort Scale, Cloud Cover &, Precipitation)	Reptiles*	Mat No
10/04/26	13:30	13	0,0%,0	1 CL, 1 AM, 2AF	M20: 1AM M5:1 AF M9: AF M7: 1CL
14/04/26	13:30	14	1, 0%, 0	1 CL, 3 AM, 1 AF	M3: 3AM M7: AF, CL
17/04/26	13:30	15	2, 50%, 0	2 CL, 3 AM, 2 AF, 1 J	M4:AM M5:CL M8:AF M17:CL M24: AM M26: AF M34: AM, J
21/04/26	09:23	10	1, 85%, 0	6 AM, 9 AF, 2 J	M3: 2AM M7: 2AF M8: 1 J M9: 1AM M19: 3AM 3AF, 3 J M18: 2AF M16: 2AF
24/05/26	9:00	16	1, 0%, 0	1 AM	M1: 1AM

06/05/26	12:43	20	1, 0%, 0	2 AM	M24: 1AM M25: 1 AM
06/05/26	14:00	17	1, 5%, 0	1 CL, 4 AM, 1AF, 2 SA	M3:AM M7: AF, CL M25: AM, 2SA M30: AM M35: AM

* AM: adult male slowworm; AF: Adult female slow worm; J: Juvenile slow worm; SA: sub-adult slow worm; CL: Common lizard

Figure 4. Approximate location of reptiles found under refugia (red circles)



4.1.2 Evaluation

Given the size of the suitable areas of habitat, the number of refugia deployed and the maximum count of adults (which was 15), a '**Low**' population of Slow Worm is present on-site. Considering the max count of Common Lizards (which was 2), a '**Low**' population of Common Lizards is present on site. Slow Worms and Common Lizards are however relatively

widespread within the UK and West Sussex and as such the site it is considered to be ***Local Value*** for reptiles.

3.0 MITIGATION, COMPENSATION AND ENHANCEMENTS

The chapter addresses the relevant mitigation, compensation and enhancement required to provide appropriate protection to species found within the site. Mitigation refers to measures that can be undertaken to avoid or reduce ecological impacts. Compensation refers to measures taken in order to offset potential significant impacts and finally enhancements result in a net gain for ecology.

3.1 Reptiles

3.1.1 Receptor Preparation

Wherever possible, reptiles should be retained on site, or released immediately adjacent to the site. In-situ relocation schemes, where reptiles are retained in suitable areas of a development site or released into immediately adjacent habitat are preferable (English Nature, 2004). This will be the case for this development where areas of open space are being incorporated within the proposals (**Fig 5**). The area will be planted up with a rough/tussocky grassland mix and managed for the benefit of reptiles.

Figure 5. Location of the reptile receptor (blue line).



3.1.2 Site Set-Up

Initial habitat manipulation will be implemented across the site. Any longer grass will be cut to reduce the sward height to 15cm. Vegetation will be cleared in a directional approach (working towards the east), encouraging reptiles/amphibians away from the area of impact towards suitable habitat out of harms way. This will be undertaken during the active season for reptiles/amphibians (April – September).

One-way exclusion fencing will then be installed around the perimeter of the site and along the retained buffer. This will provide a division between the 'working' areas (i.e. those areas

where humans and machinery will disturb the ground) to prevent reptiles passively moving across the site. The fencing will remain in place until all works are completed. The barrier will also illustrate the retained ecology areas.

Once the development is completed, the fencing will be removed allowing the reptiles to recolonise the remainder of the green areas on site.

All fencing will be made from robust HDPE material. To remain in line with the best practice guidance (English Nature, 2001) the following points will be addressed in the installation of the one-way exclusion fence and semipermanent drift fence;

- Fencing installation will be carried out under the supervision of an ecologist
- The grass within the proposed fence line will first be strimmed down to 10 – 15 cm then searched and cleared of any amphibians prior to the digger being on site to dig the trench.
- The fencing layout will avoid gaps through which reptiles could pass.
- The fence will be erected to a height of 600 mm above ground level with depth of 250 mm (to include a lip) to prevent reptiles from passing underneath.
- The backfill will be placed turf downwards in the trench to suppress re-growth of grass.
- All fence trenches will be filled on the same day as being dug. Artificial refugia will then be distributed throughout the site. The refugia used will be a mixture of bitumen roofing felt and corrugated metal.

Figure 6. Location of the reptile fencing to be installed during the works.



3.1.3 Timing

The optimum period for capture of reptiles is April to June and September, however, it is possible to capture reptiles outside of this period providing weather conditions are suitable. By ensuring that all animals are translocated by the end of September, it will allow sufficient time for reptiles to find suitable hibernation sites within the receptor site.

3.1.4 Catching

Suitably qualified ecologists will carry out the trapping of reptiles during the active season on days where reptiles/amphibians are likely to be found (i.e. between 10c and 20C with little or no wind or rain). Reptiles will be captured by hand from beneath the artificial refugia and placed into a suitable container to be transported to the on-site receptor. All captured animals will be released on to the receptor site immediately.

3.1.5 Capture Effort

The HGBI guidelines (1998) suggest that for a 'low' population of Slow Worms and Common Lizards a minimum of 60 days capture is undertaken (**Table 3**). However, considering the low numbers of individuals present and by increasing the density of artificial refugia, a capture of 30 days is considered proportionate. Artificial refugia will be distributed across the site at an increased minimum density of >100/ha. The capture effort will not be deemed completed until five consecutive negative days are recorded.

Table 3. The minimum capture effort for common reptile species based on HGBI (1998). The figures relevant to this scheme are emboldened and italicised.

Species	Population size (adult density)	Tin density (number of tins/ha)	Minimum number of trapping days in good weather
Slow-worm	High population (> 100 / ha)	100	All suitable days between March & September or a full year (min. 90 suitable days)
	Medium population (> 50 / ha)	100	All suitable days between March & September or a full year (min. 70 suitable days)
	Low population (< 50 / ha)	50	60 suitable days
Common lizard	High population (> 80 / ha)	100	All suitable days between March & September or a full year (min. 90 suitable days)
	Medium population (> 40 / ha)	100	All suitable days between March & September or a full year (min. 70 suitable days)
	Low population (< 20 / ha)	50	60 suitable days

3.1.6 Destructive Search

Once the five negative capture days have been achieved the site will be subject to a sensitive destructive search. This will involve a digger, utilising a toothed bucket, removing the grass

and top layer of soil. This work will be supervised by an ecologist experienced in reptile mitigation.

In the unlikely event that any reptiles are found these will be caught and placed within the onsite receptor area by the ecologist.

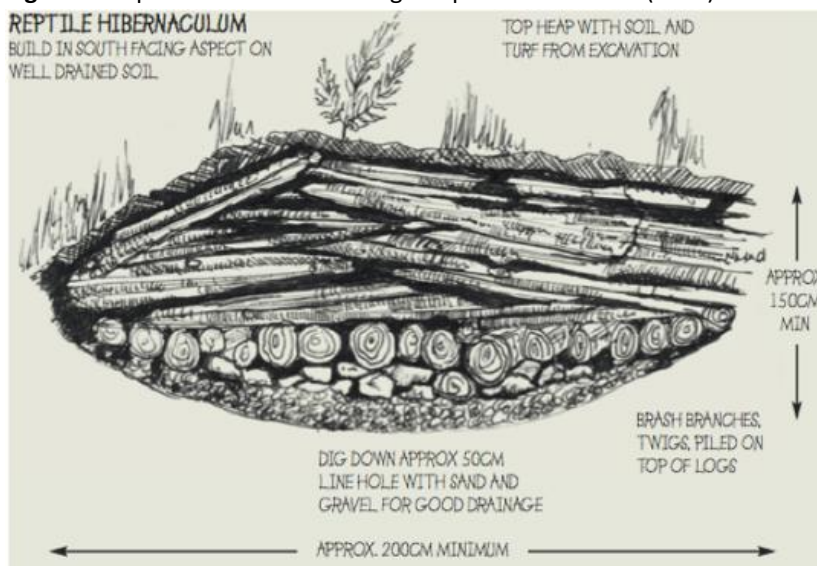
3.1.7 Funding and Safeguard

Habitat monitoring and subsequent management at the receptor site must be undertaken as required to maintain its suitability to support reptiles. The management and on-going monitoring of the receptor site will be funded by the developer for a period of no less than five years following the completion of the development.

3.1.8 Enhancements

One wood-based hibernacula will also be constructed within the reptile receptors to enhance the carrying capacity of the areas for reptiles. This will provide shelter and hibernation opportunities as well as providing a significant habitat resource for invertebrates (a food resource for reptiles). **Figure 7** illustrates hibernacula design that follows best practice guidelines (HART, 2009). The size of the hibernaculum will be at least 5m².

Figure 7. Reptile hibernaculum design as provided in HART (2009).



Log piles

In addition, one log piles will be included within the reptile receptor on site, which will form ideal places of shelter for important species such as Hedgehogs, and a significant habitat resource for invertebrates, which in turn will benefit local foraging bird and bat species. These log piles should be of a vertical and horizontal style (**Fig 8**). Native wood (from site should any tree surgery be required) should be used for both piles.

Figure 8. Log pile of a vertical style.

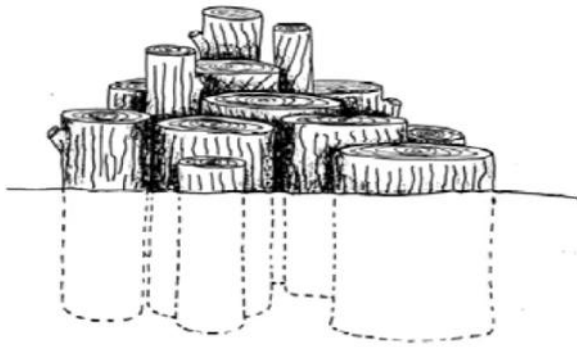


Figure 9. Location of the hibernacula (yellow circle) and log pile (orange circle) to be constructed within the receptor.



4.0 REFERENCES

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