



Reptile Precautionary Working Method Statement - Condition 11

Ecosupport Ltd
K4 Keppel,
Daedalus Park,
Lee-on-the-Solent
PO13 9FX

Info@ecosupport.co.uk
01329 832 841

VAT: 228 4313 18



K4 Keppel
Daedalus Park
Daedalus Drive
Lee on the Solent
PO13 9FX

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RE: Former Rushfield Nurseries, Thakeham, Reptile and GCN Precautionary Working Method Statement

This letter serves the purpose of outlining the Precautionary Working Method Statement (PMWS) for reptiles and amphibians, should they be present on site, in order to discharge Condition 11 of the planning application (Ref: DC/26/0912) which states:

“Prior to the commencement of development, a Precautionary Method Statement for reptiles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This will contain precautionary mitigation measures and / or works to reduce the potential impacts to reptiles during the construction phase. The measures and/works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved Details and shall be retained in the manner thereafter.

Reason: To conserve protected and Priority species and allow the Local Planning Authority to discharge its duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended) and to accord with Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.”

Whilst it is not required within the stated condition, this precautionary working methodology has been extended to account for common amphibians, in line with the GCN method statement (Tetra Tech, 2021), with information provided on actions to be taken in the unlikely event that a Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is found on site.

Site Information

The site is located at the Former Rushfield Nurseries, Thakeham (centred on OS grid reference: TQ 09936 16970) (**Fig 1**). The land within the site comprises scrub, grassland, buildings and hard standing, along with an area of woodland to the east, bordering the site. The site is situated to the north of Abingworth village, bound by High Bar Lane to the south, and a mosaic of woodland and grassland habitats within the wider site to the north, east and west.

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



Previous Survey Work

Previous survey work was undertaken for reptiles on site by WYG in 2020, identifying the likely absence of reptiles from the site. However, considering that the previous surveys from 2020 are outdated, precautionary working methods as outlined below should be followed to ensure sufficient protection for reptiles and amphibians on site, should they be present.

Precautionary Working Method Statement

Toolbox Talk

A suitably qualified ecologist must brief all site operatives, providing a Toolbox Talk. This briefing must include details of the legal protection of reptile and amphibian species, all precautionary steps that must be taken during the proposed works, along with what actions need to be taken if any reptiles or amphibians are found on site. Site personnel will also be briefed on GCN legislation and ecology, identification of GCN, and what to do if any GCN are found on site at any point during the works (Tetra Tech, 2021).

NB. Should any GCN be identified at any time during vegetation clearance or construction works on site, all works must cease immediately, and Natural England must be contacted in order to obtain a European Protected Species License or get the site registered to the District Level Licensing (DLL) scheme.

Sensitive Habitat Removal

Any suitable reptile / GCN terrestrial habitat (such as scrub / grassland) requiring removal will be reduced in height gradually in a **two-stage** directional clearance under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). The first cut will be down to a height no lower than 15cm, solely using hand tools, which will encourage any sheltering reptiles to move out of the area. A second cut (undertaken the following day) will take the vegetation down to ground level. An ecologist will undertake a fingertip search prior to each cut.

Where common amphibians or reptiles are found, they will be moved to the understory of the retained northern and eastern site boundaries.

These works will be done immediately prior to any ground works to prevent the habitats from re-growing. Habitat on site must also be managed and maintained at a short sward for the duration of the works to prevent suitable habitat from occurring. Works must be undertaken in the active period for amphibians and reptiles (April – September / October) when temperatures are above 12°C with sunshine.

Destructive Search (if required)

Following sensitive habitat removal, if the supervising ecologist deems it necessary, the remaining vegetation will be gradually removed (to a depth of 1 to 2 inches) by a digger with a toothed bucket, which will allow any reptiles on site to be removed if discovered. This work must be supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist searching each bucket of removed vegetation and must be undertaken during the active reptile period (April – September / October) when temperatures are above 12°C with sunshine.

A suitably qualified ecologist holding a GCN license will be present for the duration of the vegetation clearance and destructive search on site, until all potential habitats suitable for reptiles and GCN have been cleared.

Kind regards,

Laura Chidlow MSci (Hons) ACIEEM

Project Ecologist

References

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HMSO (1989) Wildlife and Countryside Act (amended). HMSO, London.

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WYG (2020a) Former Rushfield Nurseries, Ecological Walkover Survey.

WYG (2020b). Former Rushfield Nurseries, Protected Species Report.