



Appendix 13.2

Reptile Survey Report

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APPENDIX 13.2: REPTILE SURVEY REPORT

Client

Bloor Homes & Pigeon

Project

North Hemel Hempstead

Hertfordshire

Date

November 2025

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Report Scope and Methodology
FPCR were commissioned by Bloor Homes & Pigeon to undertake reptile surveys at land north of Hemel Hempstead, to provide an ecological baseline for the application Site and determine presence of reptiles. The Site forms part of the proposed Hemel Garden Communities, a development scheme that will create sustainable new neighbourhoods and communities to the north and east of Hemel Hempstead. The Site itself is proposed for 1,500 new homes with associated access and infrastructure. Presence/absence reptile surveys were undertaken from April to October 2023 in accordance with good practice guidelines. In total, 7 survey occasions were completed across all parts of the Site.
Results
The survey area is dominated by arable fields, with some species-poor grassland and hedgerows. No records of reptiles from within the last 20 years were found during the desk study. No reptiles have been recorded onsite, and this species group is therefore considered to be likely absent from the Site.
Conclusion
Given the likely absence of this species group from the Site, they are not considered pose a constraint to the proposals. The proposals of species-rich grassland, scrub and woodland planting in the SANG will provide more suitable habitat for reptiles, should this species colonise the Site in the future.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The following reptile survey report has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. on behalf of Bloor Homes & Pigeon, for the Site at North Hemel Hempstead (central OS Grid Reference TL 08444 11097), hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.
- 2.2 A suite of ecological surveys has been undertaken on the Site to inform the Biodiversity Chapter of an Environmental Statement (ES) which has been prepared to support the application. This reptile report has been prepared to support this ES, and it should therefore be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity Chapter (*Chapter 13*).
- 2.3 When planning the survey program surveying the Site, it was split into two separate parcels, divided by Little Revel End Lane. As a result, surveys on these two areas sometimes occurred at different times and different dates. Where relevant, these two areas of land will be referred to as the "southern parcel" and "northern parcel".

Site Location & Context

- 2.4 The Site is located to the north and east of Hemel Hempstead. It comprises a series of agricultural field compartments that are generally large and open. Where they are present, field boundaries comprise hedgerows or woodland. Other habitats onsite comprise species-poor grassland in the south-east of the Site, a pond and small areas of scrub.
- 2.5 The surrounding landscape to the north, east and west is composed largely of agricultural and pastoral land with small pockets of woodland interspersed throughout. The M1 motorway lies approximately 0.5km east of the Site, with the village of Redbourn beyond. To the south and west of the Site, the landscape comprises the urban environs of Woodhall farm in the north-east of Hemel Hempstead.

Report Aims and Objectives

- 2.6 The report has been prepared to achieve the following objectives:
- Summarise the survey and assessment methodologies employed in order to assess the importance of the Site for reptile species
 - Provide the desk study records of reptiles within a 1km radius of the Site
 - Provide the results of reptile surveys undertaken
 - Assess the likelihood of reptiles being present onsite
 - Provide recommendations for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement to mitigate impacts of the proposals on reptiles, where relevant.

3.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY

3.1 All widespread reptile species, including slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* are partially protected under Sections 9(1) and 9(5) of Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation protects these animals from:

- Intentional killing and injury;
- selling, offering for sale, possessing, or transporting for the purpose of sale or publishing advertisements to buy or sell a protected species.

3.2 The impact that this legislation has on the Planning system is outlined in ODPM 06/2005 Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System, this states:

'The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Local authorities should consult English Nature [now Natural England] before granting planning permission. They should consider attaching appropriate planning conditions or entering into planning obligations under which the developer would take steps to secure the long-term protection of the species. They should also advise developers that they must comply with any statutory species' protection provisions affecting the site concerned.'

3.3 This partial protection does not directly protect the habitat of these reptile species. Where these animals are present on land that is to be affected by development, the implications of legislation are that providing that killing can reasonably be avoided then an operation is legal. Guidance provided by Natural England and the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK recommends that this should be achieved by ensuring that:

- the animals are protected from injury or killing;
- mitigation is provided to maintain the conservation status of the species; and
- population monitoring is carried out subsequent to operations.

3.4 Reptiles native to the UK are also classified as a species of principle importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 4.1 To compile existing baseline information, relevant ecological information was requested from both statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations including:
- Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre
 - Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk); and
- 4.2 When handling data, species records were filtered to those within the last 20 years and within 2km of the Site, unless considered relevant to the site assessment.
- 4.3 Further inspection of colour 1:25,000 OS base maps (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) and aerial photographs from Google Earth (www.maps.google.co.uk) was also undertaken to provide additional context and identify any features of potential importance for nature conservation in the wider countryside.

Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Surveys

- 4.4 The survey methodology was based on that detailed in the *Herpetofauna Workers Manual*¹ and the *Froglife Advice Sheet 10 - Reptile Survey*². Methods involved a search for basking reptiles on/under naturally occurring and strategically positioned artificial refugia. The artificial refugia used were at least 0.5m² sections of bitumen roofing felt with a black upper side. These were placed in areas of suitable habitat on 18th April 2023 (northern parcel) and 25th May 2023 (southern parcel) and allowed to 'bed down' for at least two weeks prior to the first survey visit. *Figure 1* provides the locations of the refugia.
- 4.5 In line with guidance, refugia were installed at a minimum density of five refugia per hectare of suitable habitat (a greater density than this was used to further increase the likelihood of detection).
- 4.6 Survey visits were undertaken under suitable weather conditions i.e. air temperature between 10-18°C, no strong wind or heavy rain. The surveys also followed the guidelines recommendations by approaching refugia from downwind and avoiding casting a shadow and with care to not harm or disturb basking animals when checking.

Timings/Conditions

- 4.7 The following are the weather conditions and timings for the reptile surveys, provided in *Table 1* and *Table 2* below. Surveys were conducted before 10:30am (AM survey) or after 16:30pm (PM survey), however when there were high temperatures in the survey period the finish or start time was moved to ensure the temperature was never over 20°C.

¹ Herpetofauna Workers Manual, Gent and Gibson (1999). JNCC

² Froglife Advice Sheet 10: An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation
Froglife Advice Sheet 9 (wildcare.co.uk)

Table 1: Reptile Survey Weather Conditions – Northern parcel

Survey Occasion	Date	AM or PM Survey	Weather Conditions
1	19.05.2023	AM	90-100% cloud cover, 15°C, 1-2BF
2	13.06.2023	AM	0-10% cloud cover, 17°C, 0-1BF
3	14.09.2023	AM	10-20% cloud cover, 15°C, 1-2BF
4	21.09.2023	AM	0-10% cloud cover, 14°C, 0-1BF
5	02.10.2023	AM	90-100% cloud over, 16°C, 1-2BF
6	05.10.2023	AM	10-20% cloud cover, 13°C, 1-2BF
7	26.10.2023	AM	50-60% cloud cover, 14°C, 1-2BF

Table 2: Reptile Survey Weather Conditions – Southern parcel

Survey Occasion	Date	AM or PM Survey	Weather Conditions
1	13.06.2023	AM	0-10% cloud cover, 14°C, 1-2BF
2	04.09.2023	AM	0-10% cloud cover, 17°C, 1-2BF
3	11.09.2023	AM	90-100% cloud cover, 18°C, 2-3BF
4	21.09.2023	AM	50-60% cloud cover, 14°C, 0-1BF
5	25.09.2023	AM	80-90% cloud over, 20°C, 2-3BF
6	02.10.2023	AM	90-100% cloud cover, 16°C, 1-2BF
7	06.10.2023	AM	50-60% cloud cover, 16°C, 1-2BF

Population Assessment

- 4.8 Reptile populations were assessed in accordance with the Key Reptile Site Register criteria. This system classifies populations of individual reptile species into three population categories according to importance (*Table 3*). These categories are based on the peak number of adults observed during individual surveys.

Table 3: Key Reptile Site Survey Assessment Categories (HGBI 1998)

Species	Low Population 1 (No. of individuals)	Good Population 2 (No. of individuals)	Exceptional Population 3 (No. of individuals)
Adder	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 - 20	>20
Grass snake	<5	5 - 10	>10
Slow worm	<5	5 - 20	>20

- 4.9 To qualify for the Key Reptile Sites register, the site in question must meet at least one of the following criteria:
- Supports three or more species
 - Supports two snake species
 - Supports an exceptional population of one species (see *Table 3*)

- Supports an assemblage of species scoring at least 4 (see *Table 3*)
- Does not satisfy the above four points but is of particular regional importance due to local rarity (for example e.g. adders are very rare in the East Midlands of England, therefore even 'low' populations should be designated as Key Sites).

5.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

Designated Sites

- 5.1 There were no sites of Nature Conservation Importance designated specifically for reptiles within the Desktop Study Area.

Reptile Records

- 5.2 HERC returned no reptile records from the last 20 years within 2km of the site. The most recent reptile record is a slow worm recorded in 2007 and only has a 2-figure grid reference provided. This record could be 1km from the Site, but equally could be located 11km away, due to the low-resolution of the grid reference. This record is also located to the east of the Site, with the M1 acting as a major barrier to dispersal.
- 5.3 Four other records were returned but were from 1965 or earlier and all had only 2-figure grid references. Data this old is not considered relevant.

Field Surveys

Habitats

- 5.4 The Site largely consists of arable land which does not provide suitable habitat for reptiles. The hedgerow bases, species-poor grassland, pond and scrub provide some limited, sub-optimal habitat for reptiles within the Site.

Presence/Like Absence Survey

- 5.5 During surveys, no reptiles were identified onsite.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 No reptiles have been identified onsite and so this species is considered likely absent from the Site. Reptiles are therefore not considered to pose a constraint to the proposals.
- 6.2 Proposed areas of species-rich grassland and scrub planting within the SANG and green-infrastructure will provide additional habitats for reptiles should they colonise the Site in the future.

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Legend

-  Redline Boundary
-  Reptile Refugia

North Hemel Hempstead / Figure 1 - Reptile Refugia Plan

0 0.1 0.2 km



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