



Condition 28 - Reptile Mitigation Strategy

Chalcroft Nurseries

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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

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Henry Adams to produce a Reptile Mitigation Strategy to discharge Condition 28 (BE/81/20/OUT) for Phase 3 at Chalcroft Nurseries, Chalcroft Lane, West Bersted, PO21 5TS, hereafter referred to as the 'site' (Figure 1).

Condition 28

"Prior to commencement of each phase of development, further details of mitigation measures to protect reptiles as required in the submitted Reptile Mitigation Strategy (prepared by Ecology Solutions, dated September 2020) insofar as it relates to that phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority."

- 1.2 As part of the mitigation strategy, the site and surrounding habitat were subject to presence/absence surveys between August and September 2023.



Figure 1: Location of the site redline boundary.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 A terrestrial survey of the site for reptiles was carried out over 7 survey visits between 24th August and 27th September 2023. Prior to the commencement of the survey, the site was set up with artificial refugia (roofing felts) for reptiles on 17th August 2023. The felts were located across the northern and southern boundaries of the site and the surrounding habitat to the east of the site boundary (Figure 2).

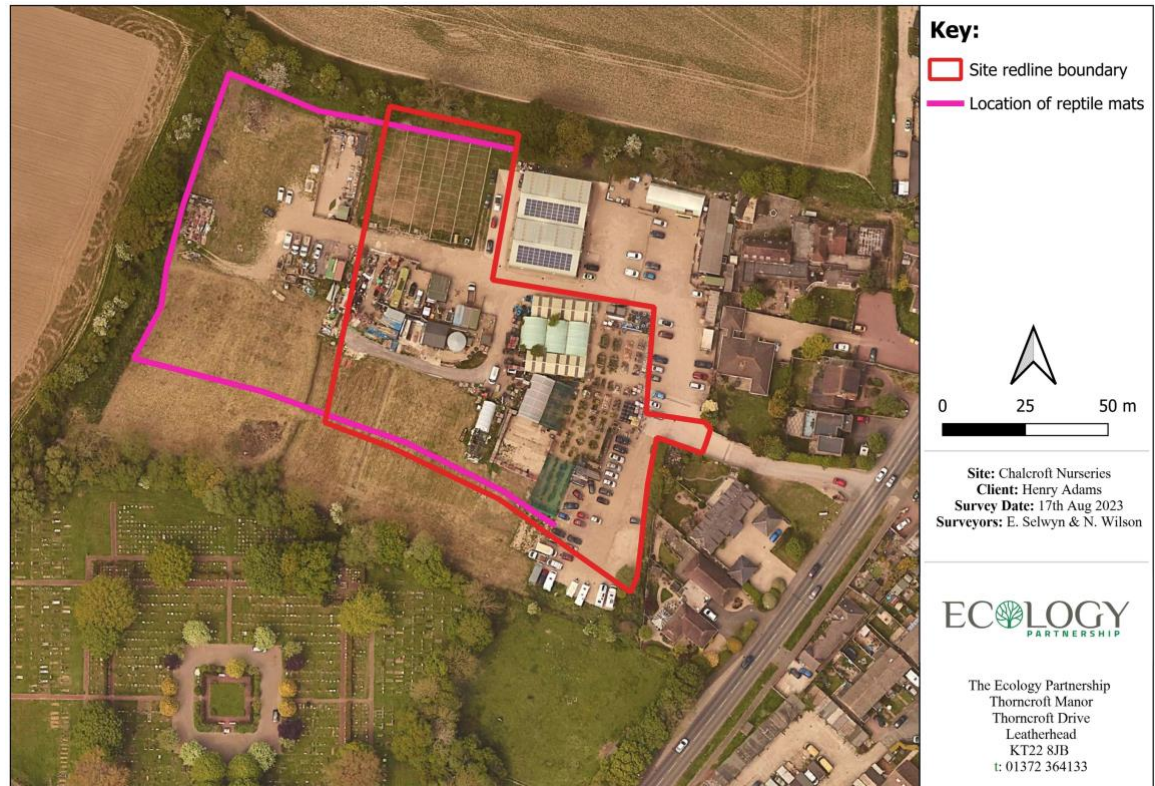


Figure 2: Location of reptile refugia (pink line).

- 2.2 The timing and number of surveys completed were based on guidelines produced by Froglife (1999) and Gent and Gibson (1998). 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. On each visit to the site, a minimum of one circuit to check all refugia was carried out.
- 2.3 Natural refugia were also surveyed during the visits. Any natural refugia, such as log piles and brash piles, were lifted and hand-searched for evidence of reptiles.

3.0 Results

- 3.1 The results of the survey are summarised in Table 1 below and Figure 3. The highlighted green cell identifies the peak count of reptiles during the course of the survey period. The peak adult count is used to determine the population size.
- 3.2 Over the seven visits, only one adult female slow worm was recorded which was on 22/09/2023. Slow worms were recorded along the southern boundary of the site and in the surrounding area.

Table 2: Reptile survey results between August and September 2023

Visit	Date	Time	Temperature (°C)	Reptile species & number
1	24/08/2023	12:40	19	None
2	30/08/2023	09:05	16	(1 juvenile slow worm)
3	07/09/2023	08:30	24	(1 juvenile slow worm)
4	13/09/2023	09:40	16	(3 juvenile slow worms)
5	18/09/2023	12:00	19	None
6	22/09/2023	12:00	18	1 adult female slow worm (and 1 juvenile slow worm)
7	27/09/2023	11:00	16	None

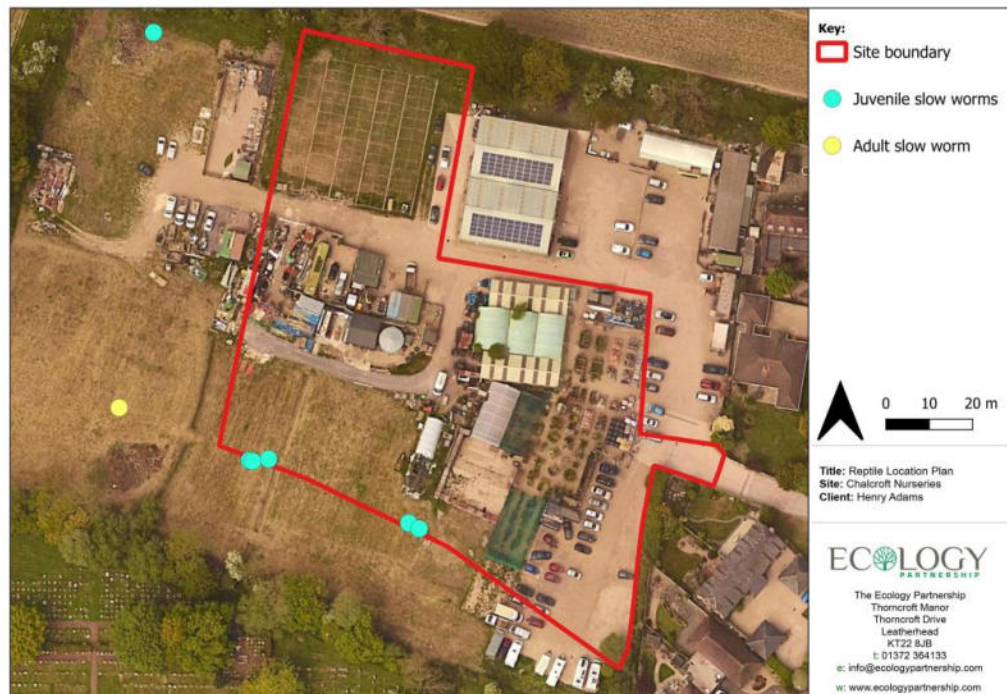


Figure 3: Survey Results.

- 3.3 The peak counts of adult reptiles are highlighted in the above tables. Population classes are assessed using Froglife (1999) scoring system (Table 2). The site was determined to have a low population class of slow worms.

Table 2: Population class assessment categories (Froglife 1999).

Species	Population class		
	Low	Good	Exceptional
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 The site supports a low population of slow worms, with a peak count of 1 adult female and 1 juvenile on 22nd September 2023. Therefore, the site does not qualify as a key reptile site (one which supports three or more reptile species or an exceptional population of one type of reptile species).
- 4.2 The four widespread species of reptile are legally protected via part of Section 9(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against “intentional killing and injuring”.

Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy

- 4.3 Prior to any development on site, this mitigation strategy should be implemented in order to reduce the risk of harm to any individual reptiles during the development process and to make sure a population is maintained on site and the conservation status of the species within the local area is not affected.
- 4.4 Given the low population of slow worms, Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) will be undertaken to avoid killing and injuring individual reptiles. RAMS will minimise the risk of an offence being committed under Regulation 41 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

4.5 The following RAMs will be employed throughout development:

- The grassland will continue to be managed as short sward height prior to and during development.
- Habitat clearance will be overseen by an ecologist. Initially, the ground will be hand-searched by the ecologist for great crested newts. If the vegetation is tall and dense, then sensitive cutting with hand tools will be undertaken and overseen by the ecologist. Reducing the height of the vegetation will allow an additional more thorough hand search to be undertaken for great crested newts.
- The ground can be slowly stripped with a toothed bucket on an excavator. The removed sections of vegetation will be gently placed on the ground adjacent and checked by the ecologist before they are removed.
- The removal of rooted vegetation (hedgerows and trees) will not be undertaken during the reptile hibernation period (November-March).
- Rooted vegetation will be removed after a thorough hand search by an ecologist. Once checked, the roots should be slowly removed with an excavator overseen by an ecologist. The root balls will be lifted slowly, intact and placed on the ground for further inspection by the ecologist for great crested newts.
- Prior to the commencement of works on site and after habitat clearance, the location of the proposed development and potential compound will be kept in a state that is unattractive to great crested newts and without potential refuge opportunities.
- Skips and pallets will be stored on hardstanding where possible and should be elevated off the ground. This is to ensure no features are created that great crested newts could potentially use as refugia.
- Where any open pipework could be accessible to species this will be capped overnight, to prevent species from becoming trapped.
- Where trenches and holes are dug, these will not be left open overnight. great crested newts (and other amphibians and small mammals) may get trapped in vertical-sided trenches. Therefore, where there is a risk of this occurring, the holes will be refilled or planks of wood will be placed so that any trapped animals may use these to escape. An ecologist should be contacted to remove any reptiles that become trapped.
- All reptiles that are encountered will be moved by the ecologist to the adjacent suitable habitat to the south of the site.

- 4.6 The proposed development includes areas of tussocky grassland that will provide suitable habitat for reptiles. The grassland will be subject to limited cutting, with only 50% of the grassland subject to cutting at any one point. A log pile will be created in the southeast area of the proposed tussocky grassland for use as refugia by reptiles, amphibians, mammals and invertebrates (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Example of log piles and hibernacula.

5.0 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.

HGBI (1998) *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practices and Lawful Standards*. HGBI advisory notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs). Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland, c/o Froglife, Halesworth.

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L. & Foster, J.P. (2001) *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*. Froglife, Halesworth.

Internet resources:

Google Maps: www.maps.google.co.uk

Magic Maps: www.magic.gov.uk

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