Mitigation Excellence

Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell

Reptile Survey

Presence / Absence & Population Class Assessment

Produced on behalf of Mohammed Al-Samaraie on 16/10/2021

Site Reference: EE-21-08170-03

Site Address: Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, Arundel, West Sussex, BN16 0SB

Report Prepared By: Mark Vivian MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist

[redacted]

Epoch Ecology Ltd, 3a Shaftesbury Place, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 4QS

[redacted]

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

Mitigation Excellence

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
SUMMARY	3
1.0 INTRODUCTION	4
2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY	5
3.0 METHODOLOGY	6
4.0 RESULTS	7
5.0 EVALUATION	9
6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS – MITIGATION & ENHANCEMENT	11

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

SUMMARY

Mohammed Al-Samaraie commissioned Epoch Ecology Ltd to undertake a Reptile Presence/Likely Absence (P/LA) and Population Class Assessment (PCA), for the proposed development at Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, West Sussex, BN16 0SB (Grid Reference: SU 95344 06908). For ease of reference, the P/LA & PCA are referred to, within this report, as the 'survey', unless it was necessary to make the distinction.

The aim of the assessment was to investigate terrestrial habitat on-site that was identified, within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), as having potential for protected species of reptile. The survey was undertaken by Mark Vivian (BSc MSc MCIEEM; Principal Ecologist; Epoch Ecology Ltd – mark@epochecology.com, 07766302243) during September 2021.

Very low numbers of slow worm only were recorded on-site during the survey conducted during September 2021. A peak count of two slow worm, all adults, was recorded on one occasion (24th September 2021) at two different refugia. There was one obvious cluster of records which was clearly associated with the large compost pile that had become overgrown and was located at TN05, Figure 1.

The Continued Ecological Functionality (CEF) of most of the site habitat will be removed, however, the impact of this upon the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of Reptiles locally will be negligible because of the very low numbers recorded during the survey and the relatively small amount of reptile habitat that the development proposes to remove.

Due to the very low numbers of slow worm only that were recorded it is suggested that it is proportionate to find an on-site solution and employ a dislocation strategy rather than a translocation strategy (refer to Figure 3; Section 6.0).

As reptile presence has been identified, the application does need to consider the protection afforded to reptiles by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). The directional mode of clearance should therefore be supplemented by the supervision of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist to act as an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). This will ensure the safe capture and translocation of any individuals encountered during the process and ensure we have exhausted the suitable means of mitigation.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

1.1 Mohammed Al-Samaraie commissioned Epoch Ecology Ltd to undertake a Reptile Presence/Likely Absence (P/LA) and Population Class Assessment (PCA), for the proposed development at Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, West Sussex, BN16 0SB (Grid Reference: SU 95344 06908). For ease of reference, the P/LA & PCA are referred to, within this report, as the 'survey', unless it was necessary to make the distinction.

1.2 The aim of the P/LA was to investigate terrestrial habitat on-site that was identified, within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), as having potential for protected species of reptile. Assuming the confirmation of reptile presence, the population size category of said population was used to inform the recommended mitigation, based on the hierarchy of Avoidance/Mitigation/Compensation/Enhancement.

Dates & Authorship

1.3 The survey was undertaken by Mark Vivian (BSc MSc MCIEEM; Principal Ecologist; Epoch Ecology Ltd – mark@epochecology.com, 07766302243) during September 2021. In total, 10 site visits were undertaken between 01/09/2021 and 30/09/2021.

Survey Rationale

1.4 The development proposals were considered small in scale; however, it was concluded within the PEA that the habitat represented within the development area may be suitable for a potential population/community of reptiles. The habitat directly affected by the development was assessed to be suitable for widespread reptiles only, as the habitat was common and widespread.

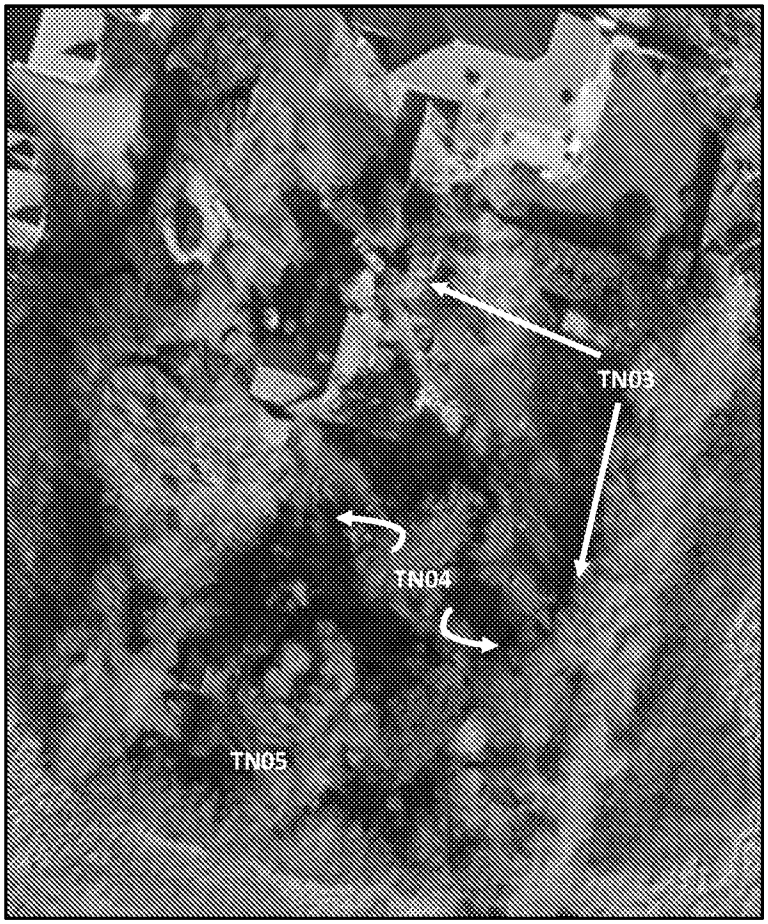
1.5 The areas on-site that were of chief concern were the area of rough grassland around the periphery and the continuous rough grassland within the central parts (refer to Figure 1, Page 5). The status of reptiles and terrestrial amphibians will therefore need to be investigated and, if found on-site, a mitigation strategy presented with this planning application.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

Potential Reptile Habitat – Overview

1.7 There were multiple locations that were identified as suitable habitat for protected species of reptile during the PEA. These areas of site that these patches of habitat are located are shown in Figure 1. The target notes have been taken from the PEA, TN05 represents a large compost pile that has been colonised by vegetation.

Figure 1: Potential Reptile Habitat Identified within the PEA



2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The aim of the Reptile Survey was to:

1) Investigate the habitat on-site with potential for Reptiles/Amphibians
2) Ascertain presence by applying industry-level minimum standards
3) Assign a population size category to identified populations
4) Use results to develop a proportionate strategy for Avoidance/Mitigation/Compensation/Enhancement
5) Provide Planners with appropriate, site-specific data to ensure compliance with legislation

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Field Survey

3.1 15 Artificial Reptile Refugia (ARR) were deployed to sections of the suitable habitat on-site on 18th August 2021 and allowed to settle for 14 days. The arrangement of ARR, as well as location of site records, can be viewed in Figure 1 (Reptile Refugia & Records).

3.2 ARRs were comprised of roofing/shed felt cut to 1m x 0.5m.

3.3 ARRs were checked 10 times between 01st September 2021 and 30th September 2021 during appropriate weather conditions, refer to Table 1 (below), the ARRs were warm to the touch when conducting each survey visit.

3.4 Each ARR was approached in a quiet and calm manner to avoid disturbing any resting reptiles before they could be noted. The ARR was lifted to a near vertical position and replaced in its original position thereafter.

3.5 Upon finding a reptile, data was collected to include species, number of individuals, location (ARR Number – Figure 1), date, life stage, and sex (were possible).

Limitations

3.6 There were no significant limitations to this survey.

Table 1 – Dates, Times and Weather

Survey Visit	Date	Time	Weather Conditions
1	01/09/2021	1845-1915	17°C, Sunny, No Rain, Slight Breeze
2	02/09/2021	1845-1915	17°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
3	09/09/2021	1500-1530	20°C, Sunny, No Rain, Slight Breeze
4	10/09/2021	1500-1530	19°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
5	16/09/2021	1500-1530	21°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
6	17/09/2021	1500-1530	19°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
7	23/09/2021	1500-1530	19°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
8	24/09/2021	1500-1530	17°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
9	29/09/2021	1500-1530	17°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze
10	30/09/2021	1530-1600	16°C, Intermittent sun, No Rain, no Breeze

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

4.0 RESULTS

Reptiles

4.1 A peak count of two slow worm was recorded on 24th September 2021.

4.2 Common lizard, grass snake and adder were not recorded on-site during the survey period.

Table 2 – Results of Artificial Refugia Survey (refer to Figure 1 – Reptile Refugia and Records)

Survey Visit	Location (Figure 1)	Species	Life Stage	Sex	Number of Individuals
1	-	-	-	-	
2	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-
5	**15**	Slow Worm	Adult	Female	**1**
6	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-
8	**14**	Slow Worm	Adult	Female	**1**
	15	Slow Worm	Adult	Female	**1**
9	**15**	Slow Worm	Adult	Female	**1**
10	-	-	-	-	-

SW = Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*



White Numbers denote the location of Artificial Reptile Refugia
Red, enlarged numbers denote the location of Reptile Records

Mitigation Excellence

Figure 2	Reptile Refugia and Records Rev00
Reference	EE-19-02280-02
Title	28 Chart Road, Ashford, Kent
Date	25th June 2019
Contact	Mark Vivian MCIEEM mark@epochecology.com T: 01273 693864 M: 07766 302243

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

5.0 EVALUATION

Slow Worm

5.1 Very low numbers of slow worm only were recorded on-site during the survey conducted during September 2021. A peak count of two slow worm, all adults, was recorded on one occasion (24th September 2021) at two different refugia. There was one obvious cluster of records which was clearly associated with the large compost pile that had become overgrown and was located at TN05, Figure 1.

5.2 The Continued Ecological Functionality (CEF) of most of the site habitat will be removed, however, the impact of this upon the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of Reptiles locally will be negligible because of the very low numbers recorded during the survey and the relatively small amount of reptile habitat that the development proposes to remove.

5.3 Taking into consideration the land-use history of the site, it is very probable that the local population was kept low by the constant managing of the site for residential purposes by the existing owner occupier. This would fit with the site data that was collected i.e. a moderate amount of suitable habitat but only very low numbers of slow worm only.

5.4 It seems disproportionate at present to recommend locating a suitable receptor site and translocating the site population. It is much more appropriate to devise an on-site solution such as designating the peripheral areas to be retained and managed for reptiles and dislocating (by means of directional destructive search) the on-site population to this area.

5.6 Due to the very low numbers of slow worm only that were recorded it is suggested that it is proportionate to employ a dislocation strategy rather than a translocation strategy. As reptile presence has been identified, the application does need to consider the protection afforded to reptiles by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). This legislation protects reptiles, amongst other things, from reckless killing/injury, therefore, a strategy to minimise this risk should accompany the application.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

5.7 The directional mode of clearance should be supplemented by the supervision a Suitably Qualified Ecologist to act as an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). This will ensure the safe capture and translocation of any individuals encountered during the process and ensure we have exhausted the suitable means of mitigation.

Common Lizard

5.8 Common lizard were not recorded during the survey; however, it is possible that they are present within the local landscape at low numbers. Assuming they were, it is believed that the strategy for avoiding impact to slow worm would be enough to achieve the same for common lizard – suitable refuge habitat will develop in the reptile receptor area.

Grass snakes/Adders

5.9 It is not considered likely for grass snakes or adders to be present locally.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

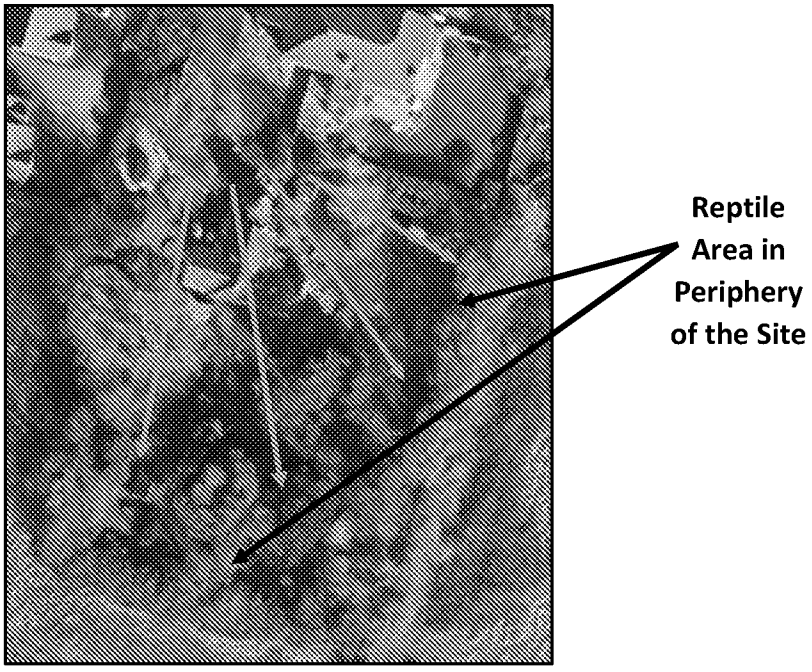
6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS – MITIGATION & ENHANCEMENT

Slow Worm – Mitigation & Enhancement

6.1 Removal of grassy/scrubby areas/habitat within the site should be conducted using hand tools, such as a brush cutter. Following the removal of vegetation, it is considered prudent to remove the turf/top layer of soil using a mini-digger or a small digger, such as a 2T digger.

6.2 The vegetation removal should be conducted in a directional manner in line with the arrows displayed in Plate 2.

Figure 3: Directional method for site clearance



6.3 There will be a very large amount of vegetation (bramble) left over from the clearance which can be mulched to make compost piles. There is also much existing dead wood which can be translocated to the reptile area to ensure the carrying capacity of the reptile area is as high as can be.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL