



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

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Reptile Presence/Absence Survey Report

**Bonhams, Hoe Lane, Flansham,
West Sussex, PO22 8NP**

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10th May 2017

Project No: 2322

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Report Summary

1. A reptile presence/absence survey was carried out on land at Bonhams, Flansham, West Sussex between the 18th April and 9th March to ascertain what, if any, reptile species were present on the site, as there is a proposal for a residential development upon this land. This survey was completed further to a Phase 1 Habitat Assessment carried out by The Ecology Co-op on the 27th March 2017, which identified suitable habitat at the site for reptiles.
2. These surveys were undertaken by Briony Hill a graduate member of Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).
3. The site is approximately 1.9 hectares in area and supports a field of poor semi-improved grassland with ruderal habitat, a shed, two residential properties, which will remain undisturbed by the proposals, and their large garden spaces supporting amenity grassland, scattered parkland/broadleaved trees, species poor hedgerow, bare ground of tarmac, concrete and gravel along with a barn style garage and an outhouse.
4. The survey was carried out by placing 24 artificial refugia in suitable grassland and scrub habitat at the site. A total of seven surveys were undertaken and the highest count of reptiles from these visits used to estimate the population of each reptile species on the site as low, medium or exceptional.
5. During the seven surveys a peak count of 1 juvenile grass snake was recorded, indicating that the site supports a low population of this species.
6. A Mitigation Statement that details all of the protection measures for reptiles should support any future planning application. This mitigation should include; habitat manipulation in the form of managing the site short, hand searching a hibernacula and the whole of the development site boundary being fenced off with a rigid semi-permanent reptile proof fencing.

This report has been prepared by The Ecology Co-operation Ltd, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client. This report only becomes the property of the client once payment for it has been received in full.

We disclaim responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report gives details of a reptile presence/absence survey carried out by Briony Hill, a graduate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, on land at Bonhams, Flansham, West Sussex. The grid reference for this site is SU 96149 01172.

The objective of the survey was to identify the presence or likely absence of reptile species at the above named site, determine approximate populations and provide mitigation advice should it be necessary.

This survey and report was carried out and produced at the request of Pallant Homes Limited.

1.2 Background

The Ecology Co-op was commissioned to undertake a reptile survey on land at Bonhams, Flansham, West Sussex, after potential habitat was identified during a Phase 1 Survey undertaken by Briony Hill on the 27th March 2017, and from biodiversity records requested from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC), which identified records for slow worms (*Anguis Fragilis*) and grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*) within 2km of the site.

The assessment was carried out further to a proposal to construct 34 residential properties at this site.

1.3 Site Description

Land at Bonhams, Hoe Lane, Flansham, is situated just north of Flansham, West Sussex (see Figure 1). The site is approximately 1.9 hectares in area and is split into two distinct areas. This includes a field of poor semi-improved grassland with ruderal habitat and a shed and two residential properties (which will remain undisturbed by the proposals) and associated garden spaces supporting amenity grassland, herbaceous flower beds, scattered parkland/broadleaved trees, species poor hedgerow, bare ground of tarmac, concrete and gravel along with a barn style garage and an outhouse.

The site is suitable for reptiles, with the species poor improved grassland covering approximately half of the site and ruderal habitat providing suitable cover from predators for this group of species. There are also basking sites which most native UK reptiles typically require (see figure 3 and 4). In addition, the SUDS pond located just a few meters from the south-eastern boundary could support suitable amphibian prey for grass snakes. Further to this there are suitable hibernacula upon the site with a large pile of brash and leaves, a pile of straw, a log pile and earth mounds also present (see figure 5 and 6).



Figure 1. An aerial image showing the location of the site. The approximate site boundary is outlined in red.



Figure 2. Existing site plan with the site boundary shown in red.



Figure 3. View of the tussocky poor semi improved grassland from the north with the fence located along the south-eastern boundary shown. Photo taken 27th March 2017.



Figure 4. View of species poor grassland supporting patches of ruderal habitat from the south west. Photo taken 27th March 2017.



Figure 5. The earth mounds with ruderal habitat at the south west corner of the site.



Figure 6. Large pile of brash considered to be a suitable reptile hibernacula.



2 LEGAL PROTECTION

This section briefly describes the legal protection afforded to reptiles. It is for information only and is not intended to be comprehensive or to replace specialised legal advice. It is not intended to replace the text of the legislation, but summarises the salient points.

Common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and adder (*Vipera berus*) are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), in respect of Section 9 (5) and part of Section 9(1). This protection was extended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Under the legislation it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill or injure any individual of these species; or
- Sell or attempt to sell any part of these species either alive or dead.

3 METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out by placing artificial refugia around the site, in areas of suitable habitat for reptiles, which heat up in the sun and provide cover. 24 roofing felt sheets were used and placed in suitable long vegetation and scrub habitat. Reptiles are attracted to these refugia to warm up in the mornings and late afternoon to regulate their temperature and a suitably qualified surveyor is able to count the number and in some cases the sex of each species present.

A total of seven surveys are undertaken and the highest count of reptiles from these visits is used to estimate the population of each reptile species on the site as low, medium or exceptional.

The survey refugia were placed around the site, focusing on the areas of scrub and long vegetation, where they would warm up in the morning or afternoon sun. The coverage of the survey sheets was spaced evenly around the site where possible avoiding areas that would be constantly shaded by trees.

4 RESULTS

A total of 24 survey sheets were placed across the land at Bonhams, Flansham, on the 27th March 2017 and left for a minimum of ten days to 'bed in' before the commencement of the survey process.

Table 1: Results of reptile survey undertaken at Bonhams, Flansham. SW – Slow worm, GS – Grass snake, CL – Common Lizard, Juv – Juvenile, SA – Sub adult, F- Female, M – Male.

Date	Start Time of Survey	Air Temp/ Refugia Temp °C	Weather Notes, cc = Cloud cover	Species Total
18/04/2017	10:00	9.5/16.5	0% cc, Still	None
20/04/2017	15:30	12/20/5	50% cc, Light breeze	None
24/04/2017	10:05	14/24	70% cc, Hazy, Still	None
27/04/2017	14:30	12.5/15.5	100% cc, Still	None
2/05/2017	15:00	14.5/19	90% cc, Light breeze	1 x Juv GS
4/05/2017	15:30	16/21	80% cc, Light breeze	None
9/05/2017	9:30	10.5/17.5	30% cc. Light breeze	None



4.1 Constraints/Limitations

All surveys were completed within the allocated temperature range (9-18°C) and without the influence of rain. All surveys were therefore deemed to be suitable.

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the seven surveys a peak count of 1 juvenile grass snake was recorded, indicating that the site supports a low population of grass snakes. This grass snake was identified under a sheet located along the north-western site boundary on the edge of a pile of hay.

Due to the results of this survey precautions will be necessary to protect the species and as such the production of a Mitigation Statement for reptile species is recommended in this instance. During the survey, it was noted that the site is regularly sprayed with herbicide leading to the habitat suitably being significantly reduced for reptile species (see figure 7). As a result, a reptile translocation is not recommended. Full details will be outlined within the Mitigation Statement, which will detail all of the protection measures for reptiles should support any future planning application. This mitigation should include:

1. The whole of the development site boundary being fenced off with a rigid semi-permanent reptile proof fencing that is strong and durable.
2. Habitat manipulation in the form of managing the site short until construction.
3. Hand searches by a suitably qualified ecologist of a hibernacula upon the site.

Should you need any further advice on the information provided above, please do not hesitate to contact The Ecology Co-op.



Figure 7. Grassland across the site which has been sprayed reducing its value for reptiles. Photo taken 9th May 2017.