



Land off Westwood Close

Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Survey



For Hampshire Homes Ltd.

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The Pavilion, 1st Floor, Botleigh Grange Office Campus, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 2AF

Tel: +44 (0)23 82 022800

Email: ecology@wyg.com



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Prepared by:		Max Ward GradCIEEM Consultant Ecologist
Checked By:		Ben Cooke GradCIEEM Consultant Ecologist
Verified By:		Liz Spedding MCIEEM Principal Ecologist

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Executive Summary

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The site is located to the east of Westwood Close and south of Westbourne Road in Emsworth, Hampshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 75295 06967. The survey area, hereafter referred to as the 'site', is shown on Figure 1 and comprises a large area of common land with grazing cattle present. A tributary of the River Ems runs along the eastern site boundary, whilst residential properties back on to the site from the west.
Proposals	Proposals are for the construction of 36 residential units, including a provision for affordable housing. A proposed access road into the site will adjoin Westwood Close, whilst it is proposed that the existing footpath running through the site is realigned around the development. In addition to the above, hard and soft landscaping is also proposed.
Existing Site Information	An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was completed at the site in May 2017 by WYG Consultant Ecologist Max Ward GradCIEEM. The site is dominated by semi-improved grassland with scrub boundaries, with numerous potential hibernacula. The site was therefore assessed as having high potential for reptiles, and presence/likely absence surveys were recommended.
Scope of this Survey(s)	WYG was commissioned to undertake presence/likely absence surveys for reptiles on the site in September 2017. Surveys were completed between 12 th September and 24 th October 2017.
Results	Over the course of seven reptile surveys, no reptiles were recorded on site . The results of the survey indicate that reptiles are likely to be absent from the site.
Recommendations	Reptiles are protected from killing and injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The site is considered to be suitable for reptiles, with foraging and basking opportunities and the presence of suitable hibernacula. As no individuals were recorded, it is therefore considered that reptiles are likely to be absent from the site. It is recommended that any maintenance of the site focuses on reducing suitability for reptiles through regular maintenance of the grassland after the cattle are removed from the site, as well as removal of suitable scrub and ruderal habitat present around the site edges. The results of this survey remain valid for two years (i.e. until October 2019), if works have not commenced by this time an update to this survey will be required.



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

WYG was commissioned by Hampshire Homes Ltd. in September 2017 to complete a reptile presence/likely absence survey of a proposed development site, Land off Westwood Close (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The Ecological Appraisal, completed in June 2017 identified a mix of habitats suitable for reptiles and records of reptiles in the local area. As such the site was assessed as having high potential for reptiles and reptile presence/likely absence surveys were recommended. The site location is shown in Figure 1.

This report has been completed by WYG Consultant Ecologist Max Ward GradCIEEM.

1.2 Site Location

The site is located to the east of Westwood Close and south of Westbourne Road in Emsworth, Hampshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 75295 06967. The survey area comprises a large area of common land with grazing cattle present. A tributary of the River Ems runs along the eastern site boundary, whilst residential properties back on to the site from the west. A subway passing beneath the A27 is located at the southernmost point of the site. The wider area is made up by residential properties and arable fields.

1.3 Development Proposals

The proposed development is for the construction of 36 residential units, including a provision for affordable housing. An access road into the site will adjoin Westwood Close, whilst it is proposed that the existing footpath running through the site is realigned around the development. In addition to the above, hard and soft landscaping is also proposed.

1.4 Purpose of the Report

The aims of the survey work and the subsequent report presented herein were to:

- Determine if reptiles are present/ likely absent at the site;
- Determine the population size class of reptiles if confirmed to be present;
- Provide an appraisal of the implications created by the potential presence of reptiles at the site;
- Establish if any potential effects on reptiles resulting from the development are permissible;
- Ensure that the required level of survey work and information is present to inform a method statement, should one be necessary; and
- Provide preliminary advice on mitigation strategies against any adverse effects on local reptile population(s) which may arise as a result of the proposed development.



1.5 Legislation

All six species of reptiles native to the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and benefit from various levels of protection. The adder, grass snake, slow-worm and common lizard receive partial or full protection under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these animals; and
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publish advertisement to buy or sell individual reptiles.

The smooth snake and sand lizard are listed in Annex IVa of the EC Habitat and Species Directive and in Annex II of the Bern Convention. They are also listed in Schedule 5 of Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and in Schedule 2 of the Conservation Regulations 2010 (as amended). As a result it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure these animals;
- Deliberately disturb these animals;
- Take or destroy their eggs;
- Damage, destroy or disturb or impede access to breeding or shelter sites used by these species; and/or
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publish advertisement to buy or sell individual reptiles.



2.0 Methodology

2.1 Reptile Presence/Likely Absence Surveys

In accordance with the guidance outlined in the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual (Joint Nature Conservation Committee - JNCC, 2003), and Froglife Advice Sheet 10 – Reptile Survey (Froglife, 1999) surveys were undertaken to establish the presence or likely absence of reptile species. Based on these guidelines, seven visits were completed between 12th September to 24th October 2017 in suitable weather conditions. As a guideline it is recommended that the optimal time to survey reptiles is between 8:30am to 11:00am and between 16:00pm and 18:30pm and when air temperature is between 9°C and 18°C. Strong rain and wind are deemed unsuitable (Froglife, 1999). As reptile activity is heavily dependent on weather conditions and the following conditions were recorded during each survey: air temperature, wind levels, rain levels, and the cloud cover.

30 clearly numbered artificial refugia (sections of bituminised roofing felt) were placed across the site in areas considered to have habitat suitable for reptiles (the locations of the refugia are illustrated in Figure 2). The refuges were then left undisturbed on the site for fourteen days prior to survey; to allow for any reptiles on the site to find and utilize them. Each refuge was then first checked for basking individuals from a distance before being slowly approached and searched for sheltering reptiles. Terrestrial habitat between artificial refugia was also searched for reptile species on each visit. The location of each reptile sighting was then recorded to allow for analysis of population distributions across the site.

2.2 Limitations

Due to the presence of livestock on the site, refugia were frequently disturbed and were found to be in an increasingly deteriorating condition, particularly in the later surveys. Despite this, the artificial refuges left on site were considered suitable for reptiles to shelter beneath, and the areas between refuges were carefully checked during each survey. Given that the site currently functions as 'common land', and therefore no one could reasonably be contacted to remove the cattle, it is considered that this limitation was outside of the control of the surveyors. The loss or damage of artificial refugia was minimised through monitoring the condition of their condition throughout the survey. The refugia were considered to remain suitable for use in the survey up until the end of the survey and is not considered a significant limitation.

Two surveys were completed in October in order to leave the recommended time between surveys. As such, two surveys were completed outside of the optimum survey season for reptiles. Despite this, temperatures during October remained within the optimal window, and as such this is not considered a significant limitation.



3.0 Results

3.1 Local Records Centre

The data provided by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) and by Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) included 71 records of reptiles within 2km of the site, including slow-worm, common lizard, grass snake and adder. The majority of records were of slow worm, returned from Manor Way, Emsworth, approximately 1.5km south-east of the site.

3.2 Site Survey

3.2.1 Weather Conditions

Table 1 Survey Weather Conditions

Survey No.	Date	Time		Air Temperature (°C)		Ground Temperature(°C)		Wind Speed*	Cloud Cover (%)	Rain
		Start	Finish	Initial	Final	Initial	Final			
1	12/09/2017	10:30	12:00	17.6	18.0	16.9	17.3	Still	10	Nil
2	19/09/2017	18:25	18:50	14.1	13.7	12.6	12.6	Still	10	Nil
3	22/09/2017	13:00	13:40	17.8	18.0	13.7	13.9	Still	25	Nil
4	26/09/2017	13:00	13:30	18.0	18.3	16.7	16.7	Still	80	Nil
5	21/09/2017	10:30	11:10	17.2	17.4	13.1	13.2	Slight	>90	Nil
6	16/10/2017	16:45	17:30	13.7	12.7	11.2	11.2	Slight	60	Nil
7	24/10/2017	11:00	11:30	15.8	15.7	14.5	14.5	Slight	>90	Nil

*based on field observations (still-heavy)

3.2.2 Survey Results

No reptiles were recorded onsite at any time during the course of the surveys. Due to surveys being carried out in suitable conditions, with the majority of surveys carried out during September (during the optimal period for reptile presence/likely absence surveys) the confidence in the results is high.



4.0 Ecological Constraints, Impacts and Recommendations

The habitats on site are considered suitable to support reptiles, with numerous foraging and basking opportunities and the presence of suitable hibernacula. However, the species is considered likely to be absent from the site.

As reptiles are likely to be absent from the site, the proposed development is highly unlikely to adversely impact reptile species. Therefore reptiles are not considered to represent a constraint to development and no mitigation measures are required.

It is recommended that the footprint of the development site is managed to make the habitat further unsuitable for reptiles through removing scrub and ruderal vegetation, clearing habitat that could offer potential hibernacula and mowing the grassland if the cattle on site are removed.

The results of this survey will remain valid for two years from the date of the final survey (i.e. until October 2018). If works have not commenced by this time, it is recommended that an update survey is completed as habitats on site may have become increasingly suitable for reptiles, or changes in surrounding habitats may improve connectivity or encourage reptiles on to the site.



5.0 References

- Eds. Hill, D.A., Fasham, M., Tucker, G., Shewry, M. & Shaw, P. (2005) Handbook of Survey Methods: Survey, Evaluation and Monitoring. Cambridge University Press, UK.
- Froglife (1999) Advice Sheet 10: Reptile Survey.
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- WYG (2017) Land off Westwood Close: Ecological Appraisal.



FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

Figure 2 – Refugia Location Plan



Rev A	Date 26/10/17	Notes Initial map production
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Legend



Site boundary



Site Location Plan

**Westwood Close, Emsworth
Hampshire Homes Ltd**

Scale at A3: 1:10,000	Project No: A104417	Drawing No: Figure 1	Revision: A
Drawn by: Ben Blowers	Drawn date: 26/10/2017	Approved by: Max Ward	

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