

REPTILE SURVEY REPORT

LAND REAR OF THE CROFT, STEVENAGE ROAD, LITTLE
WYMONDLEY, SG4 7JA

Client:	Richard Wenham	
Site:	Land Rear of the Croft, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, SG4 7JA	
Grid Ref:	TL 21281 27388	
Report Ref:	AE24.131	
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Summary

Astute Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Richard Wenham to undertake a reptile survey on Land Rear of the Croft, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, SG4 7JA 7NR, herein referred to as 'the Site' in support of a planning application prior to site clearance works.

No evidence or signs of reptiles were recorded during the reptile surveys. Although the site remains suitable for reptiles, the results indicate the site does not support a population of reptiles. Reptiles are likely to be absent and as such are of Negligible importance.

Due to the unlikelihood of reptiles to be present on site. No negative impacts to reptiles are likely during clearance works. No further surveys or mitigation are recommended.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Astute Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Richard Wenham to undertake a reptile survey on Land Rear of the Croft, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, SG4 7JA 7NR, herein referred to as 'the Site' in support of a planning application prior to site clearance works.
- 1.2 The site is the subject of the proposed outline application for the construction of two detached residential dwellings with garages.
- 1.3 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken to record the habitats within the site and assess potential for the presence of protected species including Reptiles on the 11th April 2019 (Report Ref AE19.127). The PEA reported no records of reptiles from the data search within 2km of the site, however the site contained habitat for supporting reptiles due to the substantial areas of artificial hibernacula from rubble and refuse including ruderal herb and scrub cover offering habitat for reptiles.
- 1.4 The PEA recommended a reptile survey of the site including seven survey visits in accordance with Natural England guidelines to prove likely absence of potential reptiles using the site prior to site clearance works.
- 1.5 The purpose of the survey was to:
 - Determine the presence/likely absence of reptiles.
 - Identify any general areas used by reptiles.
 - Identify any significant features used by reptiles
- 1.6 This report aims to provide the details of the results of the reptile survey including details of any recommendations where required to avoid impacts to reptiles.
- 1.7 The assessment has been prepared by Andrew Bird BSc (Hons), a suitably qualified and experienced senior ecologist.
- 1.8 If no action or development of the site takes place within eighteen months of the date of this report, then the findings of the assessment and supporting surveys should be reviewed. An update of the surveys and/or assessment may be required.

2 Methodology

2.1 Reptile Methodology

Reptile surveys were undertaken between May and July 2024. Features on Site (Figure 1) were assessed during the surveys for their potential to provide suitable habitats for use by reptile species. A total of 70 squares (0.5m X 0.5m) of roofing felt were deployed across areas of suitable reptile habitat within grassy margins, scrub, ruderal herb and scattered tree areas. The tins and felts function as artificial refugia that reptiles will use to bask, providing areas where reptiles can be effectively recorded. Where present, suitable existing refugia were inspected for sheltering reptiles, and the ground was scanned whilst walking to look for basking species.

2.2 The surveys were undertaken during the optimal survey season when reptiles are most active between April and September. The refugia were left undisturbed for at least seven days prior to the first check to allow reptiles to become accustomed to their presence, locate and use them. All refugia were then subsequently checked on at least seven separate occasions when the weather conditions were suitable (Froglife (1999) Advice Sheet 10, Halesworth) to establish whether reptiles were present on Site, and determine the population size. The weather details and results of the survey are provided in in Table 1.

2.3 Constraints

No constraints were encountered during the survey.

Figure 1. Survey area.



3 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Reptile Desk Study Information

Data provided by Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC) did not reveal any previous records of reptiles within 2km of the site.

3.2 Reptile Field Survey Results

No evidence or signs of reptiles were recorded during the reptile surveys. Although the site remains suitable for reptiles, the results indicate the site does not support a population of reptiles. Reptiles are likely to be absent and as such are of Negligible importance.

Table 1. Reptile Survey Weather/Results.

Visit	Date	Weather	Results
<i>Refugia Setup and walkover</i>	<i>09/05/2024</i>	<i>17°C, Dry, Cloud: 1/8, Wind: None, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing found</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>16/05/2024</i>	<i>14°C, Dry, Cloud: 4/8, Wind: None, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing found</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>20/05/2024</i>	<i>13°C, Dry, Cloud 4/8, Wind: Light, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing found</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>24/05/2024</i>	<i>15°C, Dry, Cloud 2/8, Wind: Light, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>29/05/2024</i>	<i>14°C, Dry, Cloud 8/8, Wind: Light, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>05/06/2024</i>	<i>16°C, Dry, Cloud 3/8 Wind: None, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>10/06/2024</i>	<i>14°C, Dry, Cloud 2/8 Wind: None, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>14/06/2024</i>	<i>14°C, Dry, Cloud 6/8 Wind : None, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>19/06/2024</i>	<i>15°C, Dry, Cloud 4/8, Wind: Light, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>08/07/2024</i>	<i>15°C, Dry, Cloud 4/8, Wind: Light, Rain: None</i>	<i>Nothing Found</i>

4 Evaluation

3.1 Due to the unlikelihood of reptiles to be present on site. No negative impacts to reptiles are likely during clearance works.

3.2 In the event reptile species are discovered at any time during processes involved with the proposed works, all work should cease immediately and the advice of an ecologist sought. No further surveys or mitigation are recommended.

Appendix 1. References

English Nature Froglife (1999) Reptile Survey: An Introduction to Planning, Conducting and Interpreting Surveys for Snake and Lizard Conservation.

Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Gent, A.H. and Gibson, S.D., eds. (1998) Herpetofauna Workers' Manual. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) in July 2019

HMSO (2010) Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

HMSO, London. HMSO (1981) Wildlife and Countryside Act. HMSO, London. Hundt, L. (2012).

Appendix 2. Legislation

REPTILES

All six native reptile species receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The four more common species (common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix natrix*) receive partial protection which makes it an offence to intentionally kill or injure a reptile. The two other reptile species (smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*), both of which are rare with very restricted UK ranges receive full protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Penalties for offences against reptile species include fines of up to £5,000 and/or up to six months in prison.

Works such as site clearance or topsoil stripping which could result in killing or injury of reptiles could be considered result in an offence unless measures are taken to minimise the risk of this occurring. Any inadvertent impacts on common reptile species despite these mitigation measures being in place would be considered an 'incidental result of an otherwise lawful operation' which 'could not reasonably have been avoided' and therefore not an offence. Works which could affect smooth snakes or sand lizards, or their habitats, would need to take place under licence from Natural England or Natural Resources Wales. However sites supporting smooth snakes or sand lizards are very rarely affected by development proposals.

In practice, mitigation for impacts of development on common reptiles generally comprise one or more of the following techniques: displacement, in which reptiles are encouraged to move to suitable retained habitat by changing the management of areas affected by development; exclusion, where reptile-resistant fencing is provided between a development site and suitable retained habitat allowing reptiles to be trapped from the development footprint and released elsewhere on the site; and translocation, where animals are trapped from a development site and released on another suitable site nearby. Reptile mitigation proposals, particularly those involving translocation of animals, should be agreed in advance with the local planning authority.