



Land north of Blacksmith's Lane, Reed, Herts

Reptile Survey Report



January 2023



Client	The Turney Trust
Job title	Land north of Blacksmith's Lane, Reed
Job number	0437
Date	16/01/2023

	Name	Position	Date
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Summary

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey of the proposed development site recorded the presence of habitats suitable for reptiles. As all four widespread native reptile species in Britain are legally protected from killing and injuring, it was considered important to determine whether reptiles are present on the site and, if so, how they might be impacted by the proposals.

A reptile survey was undertaken during suitable weather conditions in autumn 2023 (August-October), following standard methods. During the seven survey visits no reptiles were recorded, proving the likely absence of any reptile species on the site. Given this result, no impacts from the proposed develop on reptiles are predicted.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of Study

Denny Ecology was commissioned to undertake a reptile survey of the potential development site (from hereon referred to as 'the site') in August 2022. This report details the methods and results of this study and assesses these results in relation to the potential ecological effects of the proposed development.

1.2 Site Location

The site is located on the northwest edge of the village of Reed in Hertfordshire, approximately 4km south of the town centre of Royston (at OS grid ref TL357363; w3w: deeper.remission.doormat). It is situated immediately east of the A10 trunk road (London Road) and north of Blacksmith's Lane. The site location is shown in the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report (Denny Ecology 2023).

1.3 Site Description

The proposed development site is approximately 1.08ha in area and comprises a rectangular grass field bounded by woodland along the north boundary, the A10 road to the west, a hedgerow and Blacksmith's Lane to the south, and a row of houses with gardens to the east. There are no buildings on the site. The site sits within a semi-rural landscape, with scattered housing forming the village to the east and south, associated with intervening pasture fields. The farmland beyond is predominantly arable with scattered hedgerows and small woodlands.

1.4 Proposed Works

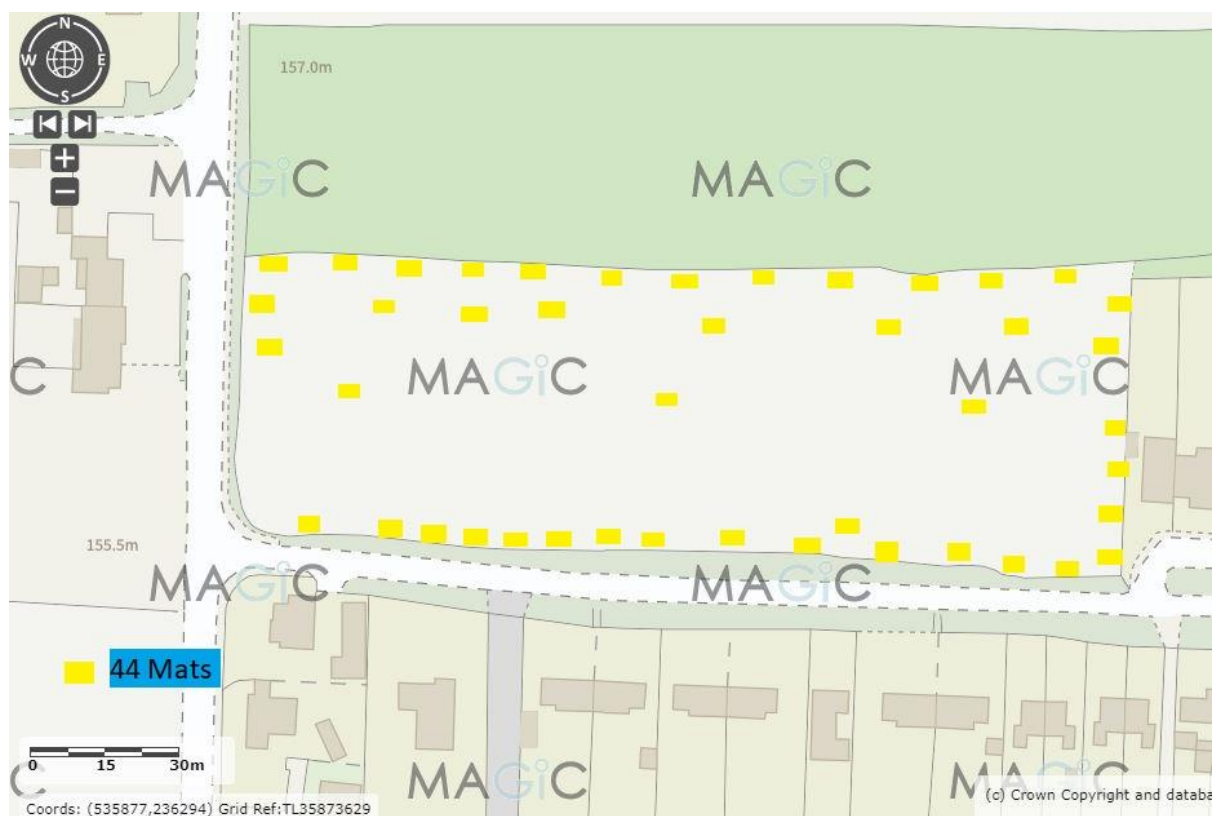
The proposal is to build new residential housing. Current draft layout plans are for 22 new residential housing units, with four new vehicle entrances feeding off Blacksmith's Lane to the south, serving different sections of the new development. The draft development layout plan is shown in the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report (Denny Ecology 2023).

2. Methods

Surveys were undertaken by ecologists Rebecca Cattell and Stefan Taylor. Methods followed standard methodology guidelines (Froglife 1999; Sewell *et al.* 2013). The extent of the survey area was approximately 1ha (see Figure 1), avoiding areas in full shade throughout the day. Almost all the site was sunny for at least part of the day.

Forty-four artificial refugia (roof felting mats of 0.5m²) were deployed across the survey area, concentrated in areas of habitat considered most suitable for reptiles, particularly the edges of the boundary hedgerows and woodland, although some were also deployed across more open in-field habitat. The distribution of refugia is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Reptile refugia location plan. Yellow rectangles mark the location of all 44 refugia (0.5m² roofing felt squares)



Reptiles are cryptic species, rarely seen without deployment of refugia. Refugia provide reptiles with the opportunity to warm up as well as provide protection from predators and therefore act as an attractant where reptiles tend to congregate, facilitating detection during surveys.

Following initial refugia deployment on 17th August 2022, seven survey visits were subsequently made between 31st August and 6th October. Survey dates, times and weather conditions are shown in Table 1.

During each survey visit, a transect was slowly walked around the survey area, checking for reptiles basking on and under refugia and checking suitable habitat between refugia. The transect start and end points, and direction of walking, was varied between different survey visits, to ensure there was no systematic survey bias in terms of spatio-temporal sequencing.

Table 1. Dates, times and weather conditions of reptile survey visits at the proposed development site, including relevant observations made

Date	Time	Temp °C	Cloud cover	Wind (Beaufort)	Reptiles recorded
31/08/22	09:10 – 10:20	16	10%	3	No
05/09/22	09:30 – 10:45	18	70%	3	No
13/09/22	10:15 – 11:30	15	80%	2	No
20/09/22	10:00 – 11:15	16	90%	2	No
22/09/22	11:00 – 12:10	17	70%	3	No
05/10/22	11:30 – 12:30	18	90%	4	No
06/10/22	11:40 – 12:55	17	50%	3	No

3. Results

No reptiles were recorded on any survey visits, and it can be assumed that reptiles are absent from the site.

4. Assessment and Conclusions

4.1 Survey limitations

There were no survey limitations, with all areas of the site accessible for survey, and weather conditions and time of day and year optimal for undertaking the surveys.

4.2 Duration of validity

Changes in site habitats and the ability of the site to support reptiles may alter over time. Our professional judgement and knowledge of the site and reptile species can be used to determine the period for which the undertaken surveys and this appraisal remain valid.

For the purposes of this report, given no reptiles were recorded, we consider it unlikely that reptiles would colonise the site within the next four years. Therefore, this reptile survey report is valid until October 2026.

4.3 Predicted development impacts

It is predicted that the development will have no impact on reptiles as they are not present on the site.

4.4 Recommended mitigation and enhancement

Considering the negative results, no mitigation or enhancement is required.

5. References

Denny Ecology (2023) Land north of Blacksmith's Lane, Reed, Herts. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Froglife (1999) *Reptile survey. An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Froglife advice sheet 10

Sewell *et al.* (2013) *Survey protocols for the British herpetofauna*. Version 1.0. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation