

ECOLOLOCATION

*Protected Species Surveys for Development*

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# Reptile Survey Report

on

**Land off  
Clifton Road  
Deddington  
OX15 0TH**

for

**Banner Homes**

(4<sup>th</sup> September 2013)

2013-04(15)

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*Please note that this report contains information in relation to protected species which should remain confidential*

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 SUMMARY**

*ECOLOCATION* had previously undertaken an Extended Phase 1 survey of the site in May 2013, which revealed that the site had suitable habitats present to support reptiles and presence/absence surveys for reptiles were recommended at the end of that report. Consequently, *ECOLOCATION* were instructed by Banner Homes, Riverside House, Holtspur Lane, Woodburn Green, Buckinghamshire HP10 0TJ, to undertake a reptile survey of an area of land off Clifton Road, Deddington which is understood will be subject to a future planning application for a residential development.

**1.2 LEGISLATION**

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, makes it an offence to intentionally kill or injure any of our native snakes and lizards (grass snake, adder, smooth snake, common lizard, sand lizard and slow worm). The sand lizard and smooth snake receive additional protection; for these species, it is unlawful to capture or possess them or to damage/obstruct access to places they use for shelter or protection, or to disturb them whilst in such a place.

**1.3 SURVEY AIMS**

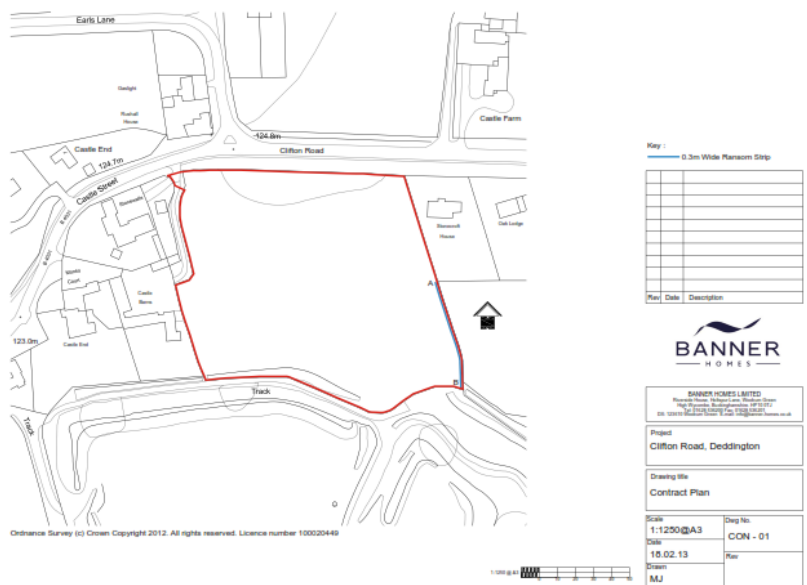
The aims of the survey were to:

- evaluate the habitats present on site and their potential to support reptiles
- conduct detailed reptile surveys to determine presence/absence
- if reptiles are recorded on site, employ sufficient survey effort to establish population size
- assess the ecological impact of the proposals in relation to reptiles
- identify any constraints/opportunities on site in relation to reptiles
- provide a detailed mitigation plan, where appropriate

**1.4 The Site**

1.4.1 The site (grid ref. SP 47144 31723) was a plot of land located south of the intersection of Earls Lane, Clifton Road and Castle Street, to the east of the village of Deddington, Oxfordshire. Immediately to the west were residential properties of the village, whilst to the north, east and south was adjacent open countryside of arable fields and pastoral land. There were no records of reptiles within a 1km radius of the Site. However, the grassland offered suitable foraging potential and sheltering opportunities existed within the tall ruderal vegetation, semi-improved grassland, scrub and refuse log piles. The refuse piles and drystone wall also offered suitable insolation opportunities. In addition to this, the site is well connected to suitable habitat (woodland and hedgerows) to the south.

**Site location**



**2.0 METHODOLOGY**

**2.1 DESK-TOP STUDY**

Prior to the ecological survey of the Site, a search of the Local Biological Records Centre revealed no reptile records within the 1km search radius.

**2.2 HABITAT CONNECTIVITY AND BARRIERS**

The site was bordered by Clifton Road to the north and the settlement of Deddington to the west, these features could act as a barrier to reptiles within suitable habitats north and west of the site. The site was well connected to more suitable habitat immediately to the south via woodland and hedgerows; beyond this valuable habitat were arable fields and typically this type of habitat offers limited opportunities to reptiles though hedgerows and ditches connected the suitable habitat immediately south of the Site to the Rivers Cherwell and Swere and therefore, to the landscape beyond.

**Designated Sites & Priority Habitats within 1km**

| Site                         | Designation          | Designation reasons |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 6 x Deciduous Woodland       | BAP Priority Habitat | Priority Habitat    |
| Nation inventory of woodland | BAP Priority Habitat | Priority Habitat    |

Overall at this stage it was considered that with the presence of barriers to reptile passage from the north and west, tempered by the presence of suitable foraging habitat and good connectivity to the south and east resulted in an average potential for breeding or basking reptiles.

**Annotated 1km Search Radius**



### 2.3 PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEY

A presence/absence survey of the site for reptiles was undertaken by an experienced Ecologist in accordance with Froglife Advice Sheet 10 - Reptile Survey. All visits were undertaken during suitable weather conditions (9-18°C), at an appropriate time of year when reptiles are active (March-October) and included the use of two survey techniques during each visit. The first technique used was direct observation and the second technique was the use of artificial refugia. The recommended density of refugia for presence/absence surveying is 5-10/ha and 40 refugia were used measuring 0.5m x 0.5m were distributed through the site. The artificial refugia were placed in sunny locations close to cover. Two different types of refugia were used as different materials appear to have differing success at attracting grass snakes and/or slow worms (*pers. obs*). A combination of bituminous felt and onduline black profiled sheets were used as artificial refugia at the locations illustrated on the following insert.

#### Map of Refugia



### 3.0 RESULTS

| VISIT No | DATE     | TIME OF VISIT | WEATHER |                 |               |             | Grass Snake |          | Other | Refugia No. |
|----------|----------|---------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------|-------------|
|          |          |               | Temp    | Wind Speed      | Precipitation | Cloud Cover | Adult       | Juvenile |       |             |
| 1        | 09/07/13 | 07:40         | 14.7    | 3-Gentle breeze | None          | 0-10%       | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |
| 2        | 11/07/13 | 10:41         | 10°C    | 2- Light breeze | None          | 76-100%     | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |
| 3        | 08/08/13 | 06:02         | 12°C    | 1- Light air    | None          | 51-75%      | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |
| 4        | 09/08/13 | 08:00         | 14.3°C  | 1- Light air    | None          | 76-100%     | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |
| 5        | 16/08/13 | 07:02         | 16°C    | 1- Light air    | Light rain    | 100%        | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |
| 6        | 20/08/13 | 08:02         | 16°C    | 0               | None          | 20%         | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |
| 7        | 28/08/13 | 09:34         | 17.2°C  | 0               | None          | 76-100%     | 0           | 0        | -     | -           |

- No reptiles were found during the surveys and no amphibians or small mammals.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

No reptiles were recorded during any of the seven presence/absence surveys. Notably, no amphibians or small mammals were recorded using the site (indicating a potentially limited food supply for grass snakes, in particular) and the invertebrates recorded were all common and widespread species.

It was considered that as the year progressed the site became more unsuitable to reptiles due to the growth of dense vegetation, reducing areas suitable for basking.

Therefore it was considered there was a low risk of direct mortality or disturbance to reptiles from the development.

#### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 117 states that "To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should...promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations". In order to ensure no net loss of biodiversity in accordance with NPPF & Circular 06/2005.

- Following the completion of the detailed reptile survey, as no reptiles were discovered, it is not considered necessary for a suitably experienced ecologist to be present whilst refuse piles are dismantled; nevertheless this should be done carefully by hand to avoid disturbance of any wildlife using this feature and should evidence of reptiles or other protected/notable species (newts, hedgehogs etc) be found, **ECOLOCATION** or the local office of Natural England should be contacted for advice on how best to proceed.

Although no reptiles were recorded on site The National Planning Policy Framework para. 118 states that "Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged", therefore the site could be enhanced to encourage reptiles;

- Ecological enhancements at the site are to be encouraged, though not an obligation. Such enhancements could include infill planting of the existing hedgerows with native trees and shrubs appropriate to the landscape character in order to improve their species diversity and to increase the potential of use by other wildlife, particularly to encourage commuting by reptiles.

#### 6.0 REFERENCES

Froglife Advice Sheet 10 - Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation (1999) Froglife.

NBN Gateway <http://www.nbn.org.uk/>

UK BAP [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk)

Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity & geological conservation: Statutory obligations & their impacts within the planning system.

Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) HMSO

Google Earth Pro

[www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)

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