



**Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester  
15/01012/OUT Condition 21**

**Reptile Survey and Mitigation Strategy  
Land off Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester**

Report reference: R-2554-02.1  
July 2016

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Report Title:	Reptile Survey Land off Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester
Report Reference:	R-2554-02.1
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## Summary Statement

The site supports a small population of grass snake and common lizard.

Mitigation measures are proposed and have been informed the site's CEMP (Biodiversity).

## Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Albion Land to carry out a reptile survey of land off Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester (SP600236).
2. The requirement for a reptile survey was highlighted following outline planning permission being granted for Application No.: 15/01012/OUT by Cherwell Council. The condition reads:

- 21 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved or any works of site clearance, a reptile survey (which shall be in accordance with best practice guidelines) shall be carried out, and the findings, including a mitigation strategy if required, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, all works of mitigation shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy C2 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.



**Figure 1**

Proposed  
Site layout,  
Albion Land  
Drawing  
3830-  
11Rev27

3. The extent of the reptile surveys covered the entirety of the Site as shown in Figure 1 and accessible adjacent farmland.

### *Legislation and Guidance*

4. The site lies in the natural range of four widespread species of reptile (common lizard, slow worm, adder and grass snake). These all receive limited protection under part of subsection 9(1) and all of subsection 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This affords protection against intentional and reckless killing or injuring and trade.

5. Destruction of known habitats whilst reptiles are present may therefore lead to an offence of killing or injury.
6. Destruction of known habitat without provision for the safe escape of animals into further suitable habitat able to support them can lead to offences under the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 (as amended).
7. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 sets out the responsibility of public authorities to Biodiversity. This Act provides lists of habitats and species to which the LPA's consideration must be given when exercising their functions (e.g. considering planning permission). All reptile species are listed under section 41 of the Act making them and their habitat a consideration of planning.

## Methodology

8. Reference was made to The Herpetofauna Worker's Manual (Gent and Gibson, 2003) for the survey methodology with seven official survey visits being made between April and May 2016.
9. In order to increase the chance of finding any reptiles present within the site artificial refuges were placed across the site in locations likely to support reptiles e.g. on the southern edge of vegetated areas and on banks with a southerly and westerly aspect. Approximately 80 refuges were laid within the surveyed area (c.12 ha). This number of refuges equals guidelines of using 5-10 refuges/ha set out in the Froglife Advice Sheet 10.
10. On each survey visit artificial refugia were approached quietly to observe any basking reptiles. These were then lifted to observe any reptiles that may be sheltering beneath. Additionally, the site was systematically walked (transect surveys) looking for reptiles that may be basking or foraging away from refugia.
11. These transect walks were carried out carefully with the surveyor walking slowly and looking well forward to attempt to spot reptiles at distance.
12. Reptiles can also leave evidence of their presence in the form of shed skin and holes in the ground (e.g. from lizard burrows or grass snake egg laying pits). This form of evidence was also searched for during the survey.
13. The surveys were carried out during suitable conditions as summarised below.

## Results

**Table 1. Survey Results**

Survey Date	Conditions	Result
12.04.16	Start: 9°C Finish: 14°C, 75% cloud cover with sunny spells, slight breeze	No reptiles found
13.04.16	Start: 8°C Finish: 18°C, 50% cloud cover with sunny spells, no breeze	No reptiles found
19.04.16	Start: 10°C Finish: 18°C, 50% cloud cover, no breeze	1 x Grass snake found off site - grid ref: SP 60670 24602
16.05.16	Throughout: 17°C, sunny	1 x Grass snake (male)
20.05.16	Throughout: 16°C, sunny, cloudy	1 x Grass snake (male) 1 x Common lizard (female)
27.05.16	Throughout: 17°C, sunny	No reptiles found

**Figure 2** Summary of reptile sightings



## Evaluation & Mitigation

14. The boundaries, hedgerows and disused railway running through the centre of the Site provide suitable habitat for reptiles. Additional better reptile habitat is found in the wider area with the airfield along the northern boundary and disused quarry to the north east.
15. Low numbers of grass snake and common lizard are present within Site bounds and adjacent habitat. Due caution will need to be taken in order to ensure that they are not killed or injured.
16. Directional clearance and removal of larger vegetation by hand should be used to remove potential habitat prior to any works which could impact on reptiles. Vegetation will be carefully strimmed towards suitable escape habitat (in this case the adjacent field, or habitats beyond the northern, eastern and southern boundaries) at a height of 150mm. Following this it will be strimmed again in the same direction, this time to remove vegetation to ground level. Habitat will be maintained in this state until commencement or soil be removed.
17. An ecologist should be present when strimming commences on the central area of the site near to where the grass snake was found. This is to ensure that the area is cleared sensitively.
18. Swales included in the design of the development will create good habitat for reptiles on Site. Elsewhere, such as along the northern boundary, the use of 'scalloped bays' along tree planting lines should be incorporated into the landscaping with areas of long grass in bays to provide basking sites for reptiles. Habitat enhancements will also include reptile hibernaculae such as log piles where possible.