



BLOOMBRIDGE LLP

BICESTER GATEWAY,
BICESTER,
OXFORDSHIRE
(16/02586/OUT)

Reptile Survey Report

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PLANS

PLAN ECO1 Reptile Survey Plan

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Bloombridge LLP in April 2016 to undertake a suite of ecological surveys of Land at Bicester Gateway, Bicester, Oxfordshire, hereafter referred to as the application site, which forms the westernmost part of the Strategic Development site, Bicester 10 – Bicester Gateway. The application site comprises Phase 1 of the Bicester Gateway site (16/02586/OUT).
- 1.2. The development proposals are for new business space and hotel development, including associated infrastructure, access and landscaping.
- 1.3. Ecological survey and assessment work was undertaken at the application site to establish a robust baseline, including a desk study, extended Phase 1 habitat survey, assessment of potential opportunities for protected and notable species, and specific surveys for bats and badgers; the findings of which are included within the Ecological Assessment document, produced by Ecology Solutions, which accompanied the planning application.
- 1.4. This Reptile Survey Report has been produced following submission of the planning application and principal ecological assessment. It serves to consolidate the previously presented information in relation to reptiles (including an initial survey of potentially suitable reptile habitat in April 2016 and specific reptile ‘tinning’ surveys in September 2017), which provide further clarity on the use of the site by reptiles.
- 1.5. The results of the specific reptile surveys outlined in this report clearly demonstrate that the application site is not utilised by reptile species. These results therefore further confirm that the design of the proposed development and the implementation of mitigation measures for these species, as recommended within the previously submitted ecological assessment, are sufficient to ensure that there will be no adverse effects on reptiles as a result of proposed development at the application site and, overall, this supports the conclusion that the development of Phase 1 of Bicester Gateway has a low ecological impact.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background & Proposals

- 2.1.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Bloombridge LLP in April 2016 to undertake a suite of ecological surveys of Land at Bicester Gateway, Bicester, Oxfordshire, hereafter referred to as the application site, which forms the westernmost part of the Strategic Development site Bicester 10 – Bicester Gateway. The application site comprises Phase 1 of the Bicester Gateway site (16/02586/OUT).
- 2.1.2. The development proposals are for new business space and hotel development, including associated infrastructure, access and landscaping. This comprises Phase 1 of the Bicester Gateway site (Bicester 10).
- 2.1.3. Habitat suitability surveys for reptiles were initially undertaken in April 2016 during the Phase 1 habitat survey of the application site, to assess the potential of habitats on site to support reptiles. Subsequently the site was subject to a suite of reptile ‘tinning’ surveys in September 2017.
- 2.1.4. This *Reptile Survey Report* serves to consolidate initial assessment of the habitats within the site, in addition to the results of a suite of specific reptile surveys undertaken at the site, summarising the results recorded and setting out appropriate and proportionate mitigation and enhancement measures to ensure that the development may proceed without any significant adverse impacts on reptiles, and biodiversity, as required by legislation and planning policy of relevance to ecology.

2.2. Application Site Characteristics

- 2.2.1. The application site is located to the south of Bicester in Oxfordshire. Wendlebury Road forms the eastern boundary of the application site, whilst the A41 dual carriageway lies immediately to the west. The land beyond to the south, east and west comprises agricultural pasture land, with a large retail development situated to the north-east.
- 2.2.2. The application site comprises two semi-improved grassland fields, separated by a road and bordered by hedgerows / treelines, ditches (predominantly dry) and areas of dense scrub.

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1. The methodology utilised for the reptile survey work can be split into three areas, namely desk study, habitat survey and faunal survey. These are discussed in more detail below.

3.2. Desk Study

3.2.1. In order to compile background information on the use of the application site and its immediate surroundings by reptiles, Ecology Solutions contacted Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). The records received are collated data from a number of sources and provide information on an array of reptile species (covering a 3km search radius from the application site).

3.2.2. Information provided by TVERC is included at Appendix 2 of the previously submitted Ecological Assessment.

3.3. Habitat Survey Methodology

3.3.1. Habitat surveys were carried out in April 2016 to ascertain the general ecological value of the land contained within the boundaries of the application site and to identify the main habitats and associated plant species. Notes were also made of fauna utilising the site.

3.3.2. The application site was surveyed based around extended Phase 1 survey methodology¹, as recommended by Natural England, whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail.

3.3.3. Habitats deemed to be suitable for reptiles were noted and these areas were subsequently subject to specific reptile surveys as outlined below.

3.4. Reptile Survey

3.4.1. Specific surveys to identify the presence or absence of reptiles within the application site were undertaken during September 2017.

3.4.2. Following an initial assessment to identify areas of suitable reptile habitat within the site, refugia surveys were undertaken. A total of 69 'tins' (0.5 x 0.5 metre squares of heavy roofing felt which are often used as refuges by reptiles) were distributed throughout all suitable reptile habitat within the application site. This included areas of rough grassland across the site.

¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit*. England Field Unit, Nature Conservancy Council, reprinted JNCC, Peterborough.

- 3.4.3. These tins were left in place for two weeks to 'bed in' and subsequently surveyed for reptiles beneath or upon the tins during suitable weather conditions.
- 3.4.4. Suitable weather conditions to carry out surveys are when the air temperature is neither too hot nor too cold. Typically, temperatures between 10 and 20°C are considered optimal. Heavy rain and windy conditions should be avoided.
- 3.4.5. The tins provide shelter and heat up quicker than the surroundings in the morning and can remain warmer than the surroundings in the late afternoon. Being ectothermic (cold blooded), reptiles use them to bask and raise their body temperature which allows them to forage earlier and later in the day.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

- 4.1. The majority of the application site provides limited potential opportunities for common reptile species including areas of semi-improved grassland and scrub.
- 4.2. In order to ascertain whether the application site supports this group, refugia surveys were undertaken in September 2017, in line with the methodology outlined in Section 2 above.
- 4.3. The results of the survey are summarised in Table 1 below.

Date	Survey Number	Weather Conditions	Reptiles Recorded
05.09.17	1	100% cloud cover, 15C	None
11.09.17	2	100% cloud cover, 14C	None
14.09.17	3	65% cloud cover, 15C	None
19.09.17	4	30% cloud cover, 16C	None
25.09.17	5	100% cloud cover, 15C	None
27.09.17	6	100% cloud cover, 15C	None
29.09.17	7	100% cloud cover, 15C	None

Table 1: 2017 Reptile Survey Results (Summary)

- 4.4. No reptiles were recorded within the application site during any of the survey visits undertaken in 2017. Moreover, no reptiles were recorded to be present underneath natural refugia (such as brash or logs) during surveys undertaken at the application site.
- 4.5. On the basis of the specific reptile surveys undertaken, and moreover given the site's location between two roads, opportunities for colonisation are limited. It is therefore considered that the application site is not utilised by reptile species, and therefore no specific mitigation measures in relation to this group are proposed.
- 4.6. **Background Information.** The desk study undertaken with TVERC returned a small number of reptile records from the surrounding area. The closest recent records were of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* and Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* returned from a location approximately 1.3km west of the application site at their closest point from 2003. A historical record of a single Grass Snake was returned from within the application site from 1987 however, due to its age, it is not considered relevant.

5. FAUNAL EVALUATION

5.1. Reptile Evaluation

5.1.1. **Legislation.** Rare, endangered or declining reptile species receive 'full protection' under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as well as protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), which transposed into UK law the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, more commonly known as the Habitats Directive. Species that are fully protected include Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* and Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*. These receive the following protection from:

- killing, injuring, taking;
- possession or control (of live or dead animals, their parts or derivatives);
- damage to, destruction of, obstruction of access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- disturbance of any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- selling, offering for sale, possession or transport for purposes of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative).

5.1.2. Given the geographical location of the application site and the habitats present, it is considered that neither of these species is present.

5.1.3. Due to their abundance in Britain, Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* and Adder *Vipera berus* are only 'partially protected' under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and as such only receive protection from:

- deliberate killing and injuring;
- being sold or other forms of trading.

5.1.1. **Application Site Evaluation.** Specific surveys for reptiles, undertaken in September 2017 confirmed that the application site is not utilised by this faunal group.

5.1.2. **Mitigation / Enhancements.** Given the absence of this faunal group within the application site, it is not considered that any specific mitigation measures, in relation to reptiles, are required in association with the development proposals. It follows that the value of the application site for reptiles is correspondingly low (in effect - nil).

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS







- 6.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Bloombridge LLP in April 2016 to undertake a suite of ecological surveys of Land at Bicester Gateway, Bicester, Oxfordshire, which forms the westernmost part of the Strategic Development site Bicester 10 – Bicester Gateway. The application site comprises Phase 1 of the Bicester Gateway site (16/02586/OUT).
- 6.2. This report serves to supplement the Ecological Assessment, produced by Ecology Solutions and previously submitted to the LPA, in regard to the potential for the development proposals to impact upon reptiles.
- 6.3. Following on from our assessment in April, specific reptile surveys were undertaken by Ecology Solutions in September 2017 in line with survey methodology and guidelines provided by Natural England.
- 6.4. No reptiles were recorded within the application site during these surveys.
- 6.5. Given the absence of reptiles, within the application site, it is considered that the development proposals have no potential to impact upon this group and as such no specific mitigation measures are deemed necessary. It follows that reptiles make no contribution to the biodiversity of the application site.

PLANS

PLAN ECO1

Reptile Survey Plan



- KEY:**
-  APPLICATION SITE BOUNDARY
 -  SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND
 -  HEDGEROWS/TREELINES
 -  DENSE SCRUB
 -  SCATTERED SCRUB
 -  AREAS TINNED FOR REPTILES



ecology solutions ltd

7057: BICESTER GATEWAY

PLAN ECO1:
REPTILE SURVEY PLAN